# WILDFOWLING TALES

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# WILDFOWLING TALES

W.N. Boy

WATERFOWL AT AVERY ISLAND, LOUISIANA

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EDGAR A McILHENNY

# WILDFOWLING TALES

FROM THE GREAT DUCKING RESORTS
OF THE CONTINENT

—BY—


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# DEDICATION

TRUE it is of many great men, that some of the most accomplished and gifted are the plainest and most unassuming, and this holds good in every instance of the following gentlemen to whom this book is respectfully dedicated. One thing is certain, did we but have an opportunity to become better acquainted, many lasting friendships would be formed.

## REPRESENTATIVE SPORTSMEN OF AMERICA:

### DANIEL W. VOORHEES,

PEORIA, ILL.

In every gathering of sportsmen Mr. Voorhees' rare personal qualities are appreciated. He was but recently president of the Illinois State Sportsmen's Association and has had many other honors accorded him. Mr. Voorhees is president and with his son, who is secretary-treasurer, are the guiding spirits of The Duck Island Preserve.

### JOSEPH PULITZER, JR.

ST. LOUIS, MO.

Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., is an enthusiastic duck hunter. He is a member of The Delta Duck Club at the delta of the Mississippi River and also spends some time each season on his palatial yacht, the Granada II, on the Texas Gulf Coast. As a man and sportsman Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., is a great credit to us and our fraternity.

### EDWARD A. McILHENNY,

AVERY ISLAND, LA.

No one in America has aided the cause of conservation more greatly than Mr. McIlhenny. Starting with his own gift of his share in the Ward-McIlhenny tract of 60,000 acres, he is directly responsible for the State of Louisiana now having a refuge of 220,000 acres for the protection of wild life.

### DR. THOMAS H. LEWIS,

CHICAGO, ILL.

When you meet Dr. Lewis for the first time, you feel sorry for yourself that the fates had not been more generous to you at an earlier date. Besides being a fine shot at game, Dr. Lewis is an expert and devoted trapshot. From his multifarious duties he escapes whenever possible to participate in this sport, as well as in hunting.

### JOHN DYMOND, JR.

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

Mr. Dymond organized The Delta Duck Club, probably the greatest ducking club in America. As an attorney, he is ever ready to give his valuable services for the cause of conservation and recently drew up papers, investigated titles, etc., which transferred the gifts of Mrs. Russell Sage and the Rockefeller Foundation of vast tracts to the State of Louisiana for permanent refuges for wild life.

### WILLEY S. McCREA,
CHICAGO, ILL.

Everything concerning our game and wild life, particularly our game birds and waterfowl, greatly interests Mr. McCrea. Jack Miner's work has especially interested him. In Chicago Mr. McCrea is a member of the University, Chicago Athletic and South Shore Country clubs and has a shooting lodge on the Illinois River. To know him is to forever be a friend and admirer of Willey S. McCrea.

### DANIEL W. VOORHEES, JR.,
PEORIA, ILL.

Dannie Voorhees, Jr., as he is known to his intimates, is a "chip of the old block." He has ever been an enthusiastic hunter and a true sportsman, and is one of the best trap-shots in the United States, as his records in many contests prove. He is a crack shot on the marsh and in the field also.

### LEE STURGES,
CHICAGO, ILL.

Truly many of the finest personal qualities enter into the composition of Lee Sturges. As well as being a zealous hunter, he annually enjoys outings in the wilds of New Brunswick and other parts of the far northern wilderness. One could not wish a more desirable companion for an outing than Lee Sturges.

# CONTENTS

A Manitoba Duck Hunt—Indian Style.
*Hamilton M. Laing* ..... 1
At the Duck Island Preserve.
*William C. Hazelton* ..... 18
That Pond in the Hills.
*John B. Thompson* ..... 25
An Alberta Day.
*Paul E. Page* ..... 32
Millions of Ducks.
*Clark McAdams* ..... 43
Opening Day in North Dakota.
*Edward C. Warner* ..... 57
Duck Shooting in Southern California.
*Robert E. Ross* ..... 61
Ducking at Moon Lake, Louisiana.
*Harrison Minge* ..... 72
Lake Koshkonong—Historical and Sporting.
*William C. Hazelton* ..... 78
Random Notes On Duck Shooting.
*Paul E. Page* ..... 88
The Quest of the Mallard.
*Edward C. Warner* ..... 94
Shooting Snow Geese in Nebraska.
*Paul E. Page* ..... 101
Duck Shooting in Ontario.
*Forest H. Conover* ..... 108
Timber Shooting On the Illinois River.
*William C. Hazelton* ..... 113
Recreation and Our Brotherhood.
*William C. Hazelton* ..... 120

# INTRODUCTION

ENTHUSIASM for my favorite sport and a desire to please others led me to prepare this book for you. Not wishing to undertake writing an entire book alone, I enlisted the aid of some experienced sportsmen who are able to write entertainingly.

It is very probable that one of the lures of wildfowling is the study of the birds in their native environment. Their conduct when undisturbed is extremely interesting to one who loves them for themselves alone. I have touched upon this in one portion of this book. Yet one also enjoys pleasure of a different kind in testing his skill at the fast-flying waterfowl, and hence the gun.

As this is the fourth book I have published on this subject, I feel that I have added somewhat to our permanent literature on the sport. The pleasing narratives comprising this volume endeavor to record and perpetuate the annals of wildfowling.

You will find herein some extremely interesting historical facts as well as a trace of humor in some of the stories.

Should the book please you, my labor in preparing it will not have been in vain.

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON.

Chicago, May, 1921.

# A MANITOBA DUCK HUNT—INDIAN STYLE

HAMILTON M. LAING

OCTOBER is the month that brings to the Manitoba prairies that period of the year that may be designated briefly as shooters' heaven. For October ushers in those first sharp night frosts and tingling sparkling mornings when in the bright sunshine the sharp-tailed grouse cackle from the poplar tips; calls the trumpeting gray goose and yelling white wavy out of the north to go stringing back and forth from lake to field over the faded yellow plain; draws greenhead's northerly legions on whiffling wings to the plainland lakes and marshes and to the fat living of the grain fields; and in short, brings a full month of paradise for the man who has blood in him that responds to such stimulii; the lover of a gun and an opportunity to use it out under the autumn sky.

Greenhead's legions were stubble-feeding with a vengeance. They had been at it for over a month; and for the man who has interviewed mallards on the fields, I need say never another word on the subject. For the brother who has not, it may be said that in certain sections this best-loved of ducks goes afield to glean his living on the stubble. He makes two meals a day, just as

the geese do. There is no seasonal regularity about him. He may stubble-feed early in the season, or late or not at all, or even all season (September and October); in this matter he is a law unto himself. But when his legions have once formed the habit, he is worth cultivation; for though we may have differing opinions as to what constitutes the acme of sport afield, it is a certainty that in the realm of American small game hunting, stubble-shooting in a goodly flight of greenheads constitutes the upper crust, the very cream of the sport.

Saturday was to be the day, but the fates were against me; for on Friday, Frat dropped off the train; the other three of our quartette who were wont to make Greenhead unhappy over his breakfast also came into town (Oak Lake) in the old democrat, and when the four of them pulled out after the yearly reunion, it was in the direction that spelled disaster for the field-feeding mallards. But it spelled disaster otherwise; for brotherly love is supposed to know no bounds, and now I was gunless; Frat had the custody of my game-getter—a supreme concession this, I maintain, for a shooter.

## Borrows a Gun.

Under such circumstances one must either rent a gun or borrow one. Good guns seldom may be rented; and anyway such guns have a pernicious tendency toward getting themselves scratched or disfigured and raising awkward complications at settling time. Yet one hesitates to borrow. Plainly, however, it was up to my friend S—.

He had a gun and didn't shoot. A few months previously S— had shown me his weapon; a double-barreled fowling piece of English make, also of ancient lineage plainly, yet so perfectly preserved—apparently—as to suggest that it had just come from the maker. I hesitated to borrow such a gun. Not only was it an expensive arm made by a celebrated London firm—it had cost fifty pounds sterling, was beautifully finished and engraved from butt-plate to sight; a very aristocrat of a gun—but it was a veritable heirloom; it had been brought to Canada by S—'s father in pioneer days. Yet he had offered me the use of it, and now I decided to borrow.

So it was settled; I would make an expedition afoot, travel light, Indian fashion; and at 4 A. M. on Saturday morning old Orion and some of his apparently misplaced brother constellations found me footing it south toward the marshes. The only ducking apparatus I carried was my newly acquired gun and two boxes of shells. Besides the ammunition, the capacious pockets of my shooting coat held a mighty lunch; my destination lay four miles from town, and past experience warned me that usually it was a greater distance on the return. I wore knee trousers and spiked walking shoes. Altogether it was to be a travel-light expedition—Indian hunting.

Fortune seemed still against me. A lovely moonlight lay upon the plains, to continue till daylight, and I knew well that Greenhead's procession to the fields would commence and end before the dawn and precluding all possibility of our meeting—legally. For this is a trick

of his; when the moon is strong in the morning he aims to be settled on the stubble long before sunrise. I knew also that the main army of these whiffle-winged tribes were feeding to northward and out of reach of walking shoes and that I must content myself with the chance of meeting some small flights moving about between the marshes or feeding to eastward.

### Making An Early Start.

The morning was almost dead calm; a slight frost glistened on the withered grass in the hollows; the air was so keen, so full of life-stirring properties that a four-mile hike almost would have been sufficient reward in itself for this 3 A. M. rising. The hay-flats fell behind; a coyote sang his dawning songs off in the distance; a horned owl boomed in the poplar woods near at hand. Then soon I left the main trail, cut through a narrow ridge of sand hills where a northern hare or two startled went off stamping heavily at their old trick; then I came out upon the hay-flat and skirted the lonely marshes—a marsh and slough chain that stretched away to southward for miles and connected with Oak Lake in the westerly distance.

A hay-stack at intervals stood visible in the moonlight and at one of these I sat down to await the daybreak and enjoy the strange loneliness of the marshes. For it is simply grand to get into these lands of reed and rush when one can feel that he is alone with them and their denizens. A slight air at times presaging the dawn rus-

tled the dead white-top grass and set the nearby rushes whispering harshly; and sometimes it played around the stack and faint Aeolian airs came from a protruding hay-tuft. The moonlight air was full of silence; yet a silence with an undertone. From everywhere across the water behind the dark rushy fringes rose a gentle chatter and intermittent gabble of duck talk. Now and again a mallard duck with the insistence of her loquacious sex lifted her voice in a noisy "Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack!" beginning vociferous and crescendo and then dying out almost to a whisper. The marsh folk never seem to sleep and they were especially noisy now that the dawn was near. At intervals a patter of webbed feet sputtered noisily on the water.

Then I heard it "Whif-whiff-whiff-whiff-iff-iff." A hundred yards ahead at the edge of the bay in the lesser slough, a big wing was taking its wake-up stretch and exercise. It was a goose wing, I knew; no other could sing that tune. Just below the point of the little scrub-crowned knoll—I had spotted that "Whiff-iff" exactly—a flock of geese were roosting on the mud margin. The water was low, and they had come ashore in the night—a goose loves to roost so—and now they were awaking and preparing to depart as soon as the moonlight turned to dawn. Such at least was the story I built from the slender evidence of that "Whiff-iff-iff." Then I started out to verify it.

Of course these birds were protected at this hour by the law; but like a small boy playing with a bonfire, I

simply had to go as close as I dared. I would do an Indian act in the grass, I told myself, sneak up close and wait for daylight. So I started. In front of me was a little dip with a bare spot where the trail cut through; in spring it was a channel between the sloughs; even yet a tongue of water reached up from both sides and this channel was a flight way—my objective and intended station at sunrise.

### Birds Take Alarm.

I bent double and slipped across the hollow, reached the far side and then crouched down into the shorter grass and then gingerly snaked off in the direction of that seductive wing. At that moment from the edge of the hollow, quite at the water's edge, a mallard drake with a noisy flutter sprang into the still air and let go with a mighty "Quack!"—a warning full of deadly conviction; an accusation that seemed to rasp out a signal to every ear within a mile. Another and another duck followed, each yelling "Thief!"; two or three more sprang up at the other side of the gutway, each trying to outnoise the other. The game was up.

"Hw-ruk!" said a goose on the mud flat—that low call of a wary old sentinel wawa that in literal translation means, "Boys, let's get out of here!" Then pandemonium seemed to break out in marshdom. There was a great flapping of wings and a blast of goose trumpets, and dimly I saw twenty or thirty Canadas rise from the

mud, skim the water and lift against the reddening east and disappear in the dawn sky.

It was the signal. The whole slough world seemed to bring its head from under its wing. From far and near rose a pattering of webbed feet on the water, here and there and everywhere, and every few moments whiffling wings passed overhead. It was possible to listen and "spot" the various centers of population on the slough chain; so resonant was the air that rattle of the water under the impact of kicking feet seemed audible at half a mile or more.

It was possible also to distinguish other things too. The mallards rose with sudden abruptness; the prolonged pattering rushes came from other feet; canvasback flocks rising in their clumsy way to bear off to the distant lake after their night feeding among the pond weed. Each whiffling draught that passed overhead stirred me as only such things can. Now and again a whiffling string of greenheads burst into view for an instant, visible in the light that was half moon and half dawn, to disappear as quickly toward the north. The pattering rumpus lasted but a few minutes, yet as I knew that during that time hundreds and hundreds of greenheads had left the water and were trailing off in sinuous strings through the moonlight darkness to come down on far off wheat lands to northward.

## Waiting For Daylight.

So I chose a strategic spot along the gutway and waited for sunup. The east became red and yellow, and by and by the moonlight gave place to dawnlight. A simmering row of geese arose far off on the distant lake; a few belated crows left the sand hills and crossed the yellow sky; a covey of sharp-tailed grouse on a nearby knoll cackled and boomed and set up a bit of a dance; the sun peeped over the eastern rim and kindled a patch of frost diamonds on the knolls and the grass-tips. But there was no flight; scarcely a dozen ducks had been in the air since daylight. Then three flocks of speckled geese (white fronted) came out from the lake and after going bitteringly settled upon a field about a mile to eastward. As I watched this interesting goose manœuver, I noticed a dense little dotted cloud swirl over the same spot and settle—mallards. Here was matter for future reference.

Then I had an opportunity to try the Aristocrat. A goldeneye came whizzing up the channel—I took it for a bluebill at first—and as it spun by me I let go once, twice —futilely. Whereupon when I came to myself I was impressed with the undoubted fact that my blue-blooded old family relic had a fierce rearward action, also that my first shot had landed about six feet above my bird and the second perhaps two feet nearer. That gun was straight—straighter even than I had imagined after aiming it a hundred times along the road in the morning as I had tried vainly to get the hang of it. It

was light, too, quite in the six pound class, thin as paper almost, at the muzzle, evidently not built for nitro loads—and oh! the recoil! It kicked like a cow.

A lone mallard drake came up the channel, calmly looking for trouble. I was well concealed, and he did not see me until I pushed up the Aristocrat. He took two wild flings out of himself as I bombarded his vicinity and then went on toward the big slough. I recovered as well as I could, and then tried to stop a second whizzing golden-eye, but he went on to keep his engagement lakeward. My rumpus scared up a few birds in the smaller slough and a dozen mallards swung up the flightway, trying as they came to locate the danger spot. I did my best to haul that sky-piloting muzzle out of the zenith and hold under my bird, but the only tangible effect of my broadside was that I had more than half a conviction that I hit a duck ten feet behind the drake I had in my right eye. I moved and took station on the edge of the slough, a gun-shot from the water, and when a pintail circled very low, I let go again. Though momentarily dizzy, I was willing to swear that I spattered the slough pretty generally all over.

### Inspecting the Aristocrat.

Then I opened the shooting iron and looked at the inside. I understood. The Aristocrat was all outside. The inside of those barrels was hopeless—and later I learned that they had been shortened and the choke bored out by the original owner.

However, I stood by my guns, as the saying is; that is, I stood behind the Aristocrat. The ducks came back from the fields at 9, and a few moved about between sloughs and I slammed away. Barring the fact that my right jaw was feeling like an acute attack of the mumps, also that my head ached, my shoulder was sore and the knuckles on my right hand more or less severely skinned, I really was having a good time. I was keeping up appearances anyway. Someone off in the distance probably imagined I was killing birds. I had gotten to a point beyond exasperation; I was a joke now to myself.

At about 10:30 the first flock of speckled-breasts on the field arose, and with a great teeheeing and bittering came winging; but though they were low, they passed on the far side of the nearby knoll. So I changed over; and I was just in time, for scarcely had I settled into a new blind when the remainder of those noisy jokesters came after the others. I watched that oncoming line—it was low—and wished that by some magic I could turn this old double-hammered relic into a real gun. What music! What a thrilling, nerve-shattering medley of blood-stirring sound is the chorus of fifty of these noisy gabblers as they wing with maws full of wheat off to the water. They passed at thirty yards, the black breast-spots of the old birds showing up sharply against the soft coats, and at the psychologically correct instant I sprang up and did my dead best, after which I stretched out on the grass in the warming sun to think it over.

I was ready at about 2 P. M. I found that field—not without difficulty, however, for I had to search over almost a quarter of a section before I discovered the telltale down-tufts and droppings—and then I had to build my blind. I was hunting Indian fashion. I had no decoys; had merely to hide and out-guess the birds. Hiding is not easy on a short-stubbled field without a spade to dig a pit; but I had been there before. Very close to my desired point—there is a point on almost every field where circling geese will cross—if you can outguess them—I found a small triangle of mangled, half-cut grain left by the binders. There I dug my six-foot trench. The soil was rather sandy, and though walking shoes are not the best excavators, mine served. When I was through kicking heel and toe I had a furrow about a foot in depth.

### Building a Blind.

Then I stubbled the edges. That blind was to be a work of art—and making real blinds, not hides, is an art. When it was finished it was scarcely visible at a few yards—just the right amount of stubble planted; not too much or too little; the longest scattering tufts leaning inward to camouflage the fresh earth and deceitful occupant of the furrow. There was an inner fringe of stubble too on the right-hand side to conceal the shine and glint of the old Aristocrat. I hid shooting coat and extras at the side of the field, packed my shooting cap into the right shoulder of my sweater and then lay down.

"Tee-hee-hee-hee!" They were coming. About 3:30 the bittering cry drifted from westward and I could see a line in the sky off toward the lowering sun. Now if my birds are going to pass toward my head while I am ambushed in a trench, I lie on my stomach; if they are to pass toward my feet, the other side works more advantageously; shooting position comes more quickly so. Having no decoys to draw my birds I could only guess; so I turned over on my back.

### The Laughing Goose.

The laughing goose is no fool. They came to the field high. Because I was so near the level of the ground I could turn my head and see every move they made. When they reached the edge of the field they did a thing most unusual—surveyed the field a moment on arching wings, then as though assured of a clean coast, did the tumble act—tumbled down helter-skelter almost to the stubble, then reformed line and headed—at me! They veered neither to right nor left but skimmed slowly over the stubble as though eyeing it for especially good picking.

Now they arched their wings a beat or two and my heart sank; but no, they fanned up again and came on; they had quit their noisy gabble and were merely jabbering contentedly. Up, up—Gods! Did they intend to alight beside me? Up, up—I was looking them in the face. But with a fierce effort I held my back to the bottom of the trench—and then sat up among them. I had almost to make elbow room for myself and the Aristo-

crat. That moment was worth a lot of endeavor afield. But a speckle-bellied goose is a nimble bird in the air, and I lost no time. The heirloom came into position on the stern end of a wriggling goose, boomed, shifted to another and boomed; and when my vision cleared a trifle I went out and picked up two dead geese. Both had fallen within twenty-five yards; the Aristocrat plainly was deadly at that range. First blood.

And in that fusilade I realized a subtle change. I could shoot now; the awkwardness of the thing had gone; the hang of squinting between those two hammers down the straight stock had somehow come to me. The knack of being able to hit implies something more than merely aiming; aiming, I suppose, is mechanical, but killing is psychological. I just knew that I could do it again at twenty yards.

Then the second flock came in. They flew low, but missing their leaders seemed not so disposed toward a sudden alighting. But they swung by in deadly range of my trench—a side shot—and though I knew that my old reprobate of a shot sprinkler spattered that flock from front to rear, yet but two birds came down, the first dead, the second to fall within a hundred yards.

The third flock swung along, but evidently knew the game; missed their friends or had probably heard the voice of old Aristocrat, and so passed the field without offering to call. So I sat down to await the coming of Greenhead. He is usually not due till near sunset. And watching a bright October day waning to its sunset close

here on the game-fields where one may see much wild life and little killing, is time spent not idly or amiss. For the eye and mind on the qui vive there is always something of interest; a snowy owl keeping vigil on a hay stack; a flock of chippering Lapland Longspurs swirling about; a hurrying sharp-shinned hawk or a marauding northern shrike at his hunting. For there is a lot more in hunting upon the stubble-fields than in merely bringing old Wawa or Greenhead to a game pocket.

### Mallards Begin Moving.

Toward sundown the mallards began moving. In long wavering strings they left the marshes and set out to northward, flying high and safely as to a far destination. It was good to see them go, just to watch them. At length I was startled out of my "Whither midst falling dew" reverie by a sudden volley of shots, five or six in number, that came from behind a knoll a quarter of a mile to southwestward near the bend of the slough, and I saw a small flock of ducks there wriggling and reforming ranks. I had company. A small flight had started out in that direction and were drawing the compliments of at least three guns—the occupants of the automobile, I judged, that had passed that way an hour previously.

Again and again small knots of ducks passed along behind that knoll to receive a volley of six shots and then go on to eastward. As far as I could see, no birds ever came down; lamentable shooting it seemed; for I doubt that there is a shooter alive who can look on as bad work

and not feel assured that he could wipe the other fellow's eye. It seemed that I was going to be slighted; but just a moment after I stretched out again in my trench I heard the unmistakable song of a mallard's wing and a big drake went by.

He was craning his neck as he flew, surveying the field, evidently looking for a spot to enjoy a meal alone. I talked to him and he turned back in a moment and circled. If there is one thing I can do fairly well it is talk to a mallard; that is the only language other than the mother tongue that I have ever been able to learn. But he was a solitary, wise old rascal with a curl in his tail. At his first circle he saw me and took a sudden fling; but because I did not move a winker he decided that he had been mistaken and presently came back. I dared not discuss the situation with him while he was headed in—he was fairly high anyhow—and I had perforce to always call him from the rear.

"Come on down!" I coaxed. "All kinds of fat eating here; not a gun nearer than those of no-account fools beyond the knoll. Come on down!" And he did come. He lowered all of a sudden and swung back fairly overhead. How he wriggled and bore skyward on the instant that I jumped. But my second barrel brought him down winged.

Then a small flock came whiffling along from the westward and they were easy. It is always easier to pull conversational wool over the eyes of a flock than over the vision of one of those half-reputable old bachelors

or divorcee drakes out for a selfish, solitary time of it; and I called my new visitors in close and dropped another bird. Treachery; but I was playing Indian now and surely half fair at least.

### End of Day's Sport.

Time was almost up. The yellow sun was burning half hidden below the prairie rim, when I saw two more ducks leave the slough and head toward the shooters behind the knoll. The usual six shoots rang out, and two badly scared birds swirled up and off to eastward, but turned nearer me than any of the other birds had done. Then I began to call—the loud quacking call at first to attract attention, and then the conversational gabble to touch their appetites. And they turned, slowly at first, then veered over toward my field. Twice they circled wide, and I feared that I was out-generaled; then when they were a hundred yards distant I let go a muffled jabber of my choicest mallard gossip and one bird answered with a gutteral jabber and the two lowered and came fairly at me.

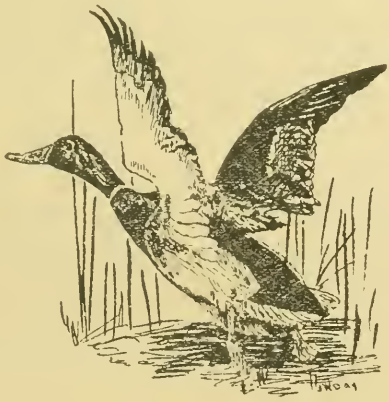
One with each barrel; and drakes at that! Hurrah for the Aristocrat! Then I put on my shooting coat, slipped four mallards into the pockets, tied the necks of four sleek geese securely in a neat bouquet, spread their heavy round bodies two and two across the back of my neck and staggered off toward the road.

"Gee!" said the driver of the auto, as I climbed in

over the road door, "you hunt like an Indian, but you get 'em."

I tucked my feet among a cart-load of ducking paraphernalia—everything pretty much save a metal punt was in that tonneau—and then inquired what luck. They had been out all day; those men, three guns, an auto, and the paraphernalia, and now were returning to Brandon without a feather.

"Tough luck," I said, as I climbed out in town, "but next time get a pair of hiking shoes, borrow a good old blunderbuss of English extraction and try it my way—Indian fashion."



# AT THE DUCK ISLAND PRESERVE

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

PASSING years have given the writer many enjoyable days on the marsh and in the blind, but he most esteems those spent the first part of November during the past season as the guest of Daniel Voorhees, president of the Duck Island Preserve on the Illinois River. Fortunate indeed is the sportsman who has an opportunity to be entertained by such a sterling sportsman and at such a splendid resort for waterfowl. He is assured of the cream of wildfowl shooting and that everything will be done for his personal comfort.

That was during the first week of November, and I had just finished a trip of 175 miles down the Illinois River alone in a ducking boat, hunting on the way. This was the second time I had made the trip. I started from Morris, the first town on the upper river. The Duck Island Preserve lies 32 miles below Peoria. There are about 25 clubs on the river and this is one of the best. The total length of the river is nearly 350 miles, entirely within the State of Illinois.

I was to visit the club on invitation of Daniel Voorhees, the president.

"Would you like to see the lake?" said a friendly pusher at the Duck Island club house, where I was await-

ing the return of Daniel Voorhees. A member of the club had come in with a broken gun and this young man had been his guide.

On my assuring him that I would, together we walked down the path through an opening in the trees leading from the club house to where a narrow channel ran in from the main lake. On the shore was an observation tower from which one could locate the flight of waterfowl at a distance with a pair of field glasses.

### Ideal Day For Ducks.

Before us were acres of the American lotus, their huge leaves waving in the strong northwest wind. An ideal day for ducks, clouds of which were hovering over the open waters of the lake, and others at rest on its bosom, which glistened in the November sun. Large flocks were constantly trading back and forth from the Clear Lake Outing club grounds, which lie across the river, and the Duck Island club. The ducks were high on these flights to clear the enormous oak trees which border both sides of the river.

As we stood on the shore of the lake a flock of green-wing teal went whizzing by us over the swaying lotus beds, swirling and drifting as caught by the wind and fighting their way into the teeth of the gale like so many erratic jacksnipe. They are surely the speed boys.

The view of the lake was one of great beauty and carried me back to the earliest recollections of the sport. Could any sportsman view such a beautiful scene without having his blood stirred and his heartbeats quicken?

## The Start Next Morning.

"You won't need any decoys," I was assured the next morning, as I started down the lake in company with two other boats containing Dr. Lewis and Judge Carpenter of Chicago and their pushers. I myself was hunting alone.

After proceeding down the lake nearly a mile, we followed a channel into the goose pond, where my companions located and I pressed on a few hundred yards further into the dead overflowed timber. There were little patches of buckbrush here and there and water covered all this part of the club's domain. Contrary to general belief, water does not rot the timber.

Large numbers of mallards and gray ducks, which had been routed out by our approach, now began to return. My boat was partially concealed by a few trees standing upright. I made no attempt to build a blind as it was unnecessary. Some of the keen-eyed mallards would see me at times, of course, especially when swinging nearly overhead.

My first shot at a single gray duck was missed and my thought was that it was foolish of me to shoot at him at all. Thus one salves one's conscience for a miss. Then I did better, getting three straight, all single birds, two gray ducks and a fat mallard hen. A few flocks of pintails circled around, but these long-necked and wise birds, often when headed directly toward me and I expected to certainly get a shot, would veer off before reaching me

just enough to put them safely out of range. I felt that it would be straining the gun to shoot at them. Besides, there were plenty of other ducks to be had.

### Tries For Some Mallards.

I would try for some mallards. Here comes a pair and why not make a double. I failed, though, getting my first bird only.

Here comes a mallard hen and she is apparently determined to alight in a little opening just in front of me without any precautionary circles. Her wings were cupped in close to her body as she lowers directly facing me. There was no warning for her. She never saw me. I made a center shot on her and she dropped with a tremendous splash.

Well, so the day continued with a succession of hits and misses. I made a few good shots and some poor ones. I was glad no one was near to see some of the misses. It would not have added to my reputation as a marksman.

### Strange Happening Occurs.

Just before I had my limit, an unusual and amusing incident occurred. It seems hardly credible, but is true. It was the first time in my life I ever had it happen. I would not have objected to a spectator this time.

A single mallard drake approached me with the wind at a good speed and pretty well up in the air. He was perhaps 45 or 50 yards high. I fired at him just before

he was immediately overhead. He fell with great force directly into the boat, with a resounding crash. He barely missed me. Had he been winged, the force with which he struck the boat would have killed him. A good idea, this dropping them in the boat, if one could do it with certainty.

After bagging two more birds, I had the legal limit of fifteen birds, eight mallards and seven gray ducks (gadwalls) and wended my way back to the club house, arriving about 2 o'clock, and found about all the hunters had returned, each with the limit.

So ended my first day at this glorious resort of waterfowl, and it is one which will linger long in my memory.

### Lotus Beds Rare Feature.

The feature of the Duck Island Preserve which first attracts your interest is the immense beds of American lotus. The lotus has played an important part in ancient history and art. The whole story of creation, the genesis and fulfilment of life are imaged in this beautiful plant that takes its rise from the lowliest places, passes through dark and troubled waters, yet brings to maturity a pure, a spiritually perfect flower. The lotuses or nelumbians, gigantic in size, exquisite of hue, delicately perfumed, easily hold a foremost place among aquatic flowers. Their brown seed pods, rising above the waters after the flowers have gone, are so strikingly decorative none can pass them unobserving.

Nelumbians differ from water lilies in that they lift both leaves and blossoms high above the water. Water lilies float serenely upon the water, tugging at their stems like moored boats. Lotuses spring well above the water like huge gulls rising for flight.

The entire Duck Island Preserve is covered by a permanent federal injunction, putting it under the charge of the United States marshals of the state. This prevents poaching. Poachers that have been caught in the past have been convicted and severely sentenced. The last two with $100 fine and imprisonment.

Participating at the sport at the club while I was there were Daniel Voorhees, Dannie, Jr., and C. J. Sammis of Peoria, Senator Alderson of Pekin, Judge George A. Carpenter, Dr. Thomas H. Lewis, C. W. Stiger, Russell Tyson and W. W. Wheelock of Chicago. Truly a coterie to gladden the heart of a sportsman and who added much by their companionship.

### Dannie, Jr., Is Crack Duck Shot.

Dannie, Jr., is a crack duck shot. He was shooting a Parker 10-gauge with 34-inch barrels and brought ducks down with precision from a considerable height. Dannie has shot ducks since 6 years of age. He is beside one of the best traps shots in America, making many fine scores the past few seasons at both live birds and inanimate targets.

A strict rule at this progressive club is that only one gun is allowed in a boat and the guide or pusher is not

permitted to shoot. This restricts each member to fifteen birds. The rule might well be followed at other preserves.

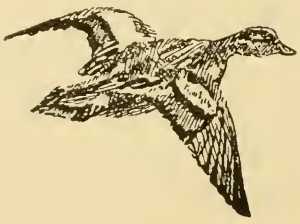
Each evening in the spacious living room, by an open fireplace, drawing for location for the next day's sport would take place, a custom of the club for many years.

Not a single magazine or automatic gun was in evidence, and I believe their use is prohibited.

Mallards seemed to predominate on the club territory, with gray ducks next in profusion. An excellent bird, the gray duck.

Daniel Voorhees is held in affectionate reverence and esteemed as a brother individually by every member of the club. Their loyalty was ever apparent.

Here's long life to the Duck Island club and the prince of sportsmen, Daniel Voorhees!



# THAT POND IN THE HILLS

JOHN B. THOMPSON

SURELY this narrative may be attributed to the log fire in my cozy cabin. Like all log fires, it is an arch tyrant at stirring up reminiscence. I stare passively at its alternating serene and spasmodic light, then suddenly it takes hold of my mind and leads my thought into active visualization of marshes, lakes and heavily timbered swamps. Only an instant I endeavor to resist, but quickly yield to the soothing warmth of the room and its beautiful soft yellow luxuriance. Each tiny flame of the hardwood fire has its influence, perhaps fitful as sometimes is the duck flight. Then anew, a steady, sprewing, sibilant, gaseous jet of light attracts my attention, and it recalls nothing so much as a similar log heap in front of a camp I visit yearly in a somewhat unknown ducking territory way back in the Ozark hills.

Refer to a swift mountain stream as a place where ducks are plentiful, and you only stir up incredulity. Once I was constructed along those lines; I judged everything by precedent; environments I had heretofore frequented. But now I know that the Red Gods do not forget hill streams entirely. There are ducks to be found

somewhere along them in season, if you are only fortunate enough to discover the proper place; such was the announcement Billy Green, my Ozark guide, made.

Up that ubiquitous, cross-fringed, crystal-clear, swift Current River Billy and I poled toward the deer country. All that day's work had been of a gruelling nature; Billy at the stern with long-handled, steel-shod paddle guiding the rakish johnboat, and I in front assisting my utmost with a strong sassafras pole. And that sturdy, imperturbable, gray-eyed Ozarker set the pace so fast that I had slight leisure to contemplate the landscape until we approached our first night's camping place.

### Rare Beauty of Ozark Scenery.

Toward evening slowly, but much to my joy, we achieved a long swift shoal, which Billy announced would terminate the day's work. Just as we drifted in gratingly among the coarse gravel of the bar, I gazed ahead at the encircling altitudes of pine and hardwood. Such transcendent coloring of the fall-painted foliage I have never seen equalled, and, many times as I had beheld it, I was amazed at its splendor. I stared, unable to give voice to my pleasure, for something more pertinent held me spellbound. Crossing from east to west, almost shimmering in the fading pink of sunset, but a small distance over craggy altitudes, was one single mile-wide mass of wildfowl in flight. Immediately I recalled Billy's tales, and I knew I was somewhere close to his promised ducking ground.

One has only to conjure a large typical mountain stream that knows not peaceful water, a veritable pent-up, angry river, that fruitlessly and incessantly beats itself against flint-rock barriers, to get an idea of Current River. At the subsidence of a particularly long sweep of fast shoal water on the west side a huge hump-backed bluff bearing the name Buffalo rises abruptly amidst the timbers and water. A small creek creeps along its north rampart and ends in a large round blue pool of still water as it meets Current River, altogether conveying the picture of a gigantic pan. Were this pool estimated according to rural measurements it would contain about and acre and a half of water.

### Great Bands of Wildfowl Appear.

The very morning that Billy and I paddled up to it along the sunny side of Buffalo I fancied that all the ducks in the world had been subjected through some miracle to a kind of baling process, and had been dumped into that hole. Nothing else could explain how the immense number of ducks could have crowded into it. I never fired a single shot. I was too astonished, and gazed for fully ten minutes open-mouthed, as I beheld the ludicrous efforts of the wildfowl to get into flight. Seemingly each duck interfered with another, so close had they been packed, at their inebriate efforts to fly.

"Reckon we hadn't better kill nothin' but greenheads," questioned Billy. Perplexed, like myself, he was taking into consideration the vast amount of ducks that were

already attempting a return to their beloved pond. "If we don't, shootin' won't last long. We will have too durned many any other way."

An Ozarker's classification of ducks is according to his own ideas; the opinions of naturalists count for naught. It is folly to contradict a native of the hills. Every drake mallard is classified "greenhead," and every hen mallard, pintail, widgeon, or gadwall, or whatever it is, undergoes the appellation of mallard, except "woodies," wood ducks and teals. They solve the problem of meaning every other sort of drake with the uncontradictable name of "duck," notwithstanding males of other species have heads with coloring suggestive of sex, although it is entirely unregarded by the hill billies.

When we had completed a very poor blind, contrived out of willow and sycamore bough laden with brown leaves, we were stationed very close to the pond. The flight apparently was every bit as extensive as on the previous evening. It was inexplicable what particular charm that pond had for ducks. For long distances we could espy them toward the north and east, but from the south Buffalo concealed their movements, as well as the bottom timber toward the west.

### Strange Actions of Waterfowl.

It was certainly an interesting sight to observe the behavior of wildfowl. Most rushed in from the northwest, and with no preliminary circlings, cupped wings, let loose and pitched for the pond. No doubt they were not blind-

wary, for they never detected our presence until we shouted and opened up on the greenheads. I am positive they never expected a glimpse of man in that extreme corner of the Irish wilderness. We got many greenheads, for mallards were abundant. I shot a twenty, and Billy did fine execution with his far-ranged twelve, L. C. Smith. But he boasted so much, however, on the merits of that famous gun, that I got him to betting on his skill; for in selecting greenheads alone, we frequently had goose eggs charged against our score.

At times ducks were actually perverse about returning to the pond; though after we grew so careless, we took no advantage of the concealment the blind afforded. Then they would come upon us unexpectedly. Some that had been driven by our fire abruptly appeared around the bend of Buffalo Bluff. Others slipped into our midst through the grove of sycamores on the west. Mallards, however, never came that route; perhaps because we had featured them too strenuously they were more wary. But many of them visited our decoys of dead ducks.

As I recall the day as accurately as my log fire suggests, Billy and I were even on the kills. We somewhat appeased our pricking consciences by promising to prevent waste by donating most of our ducks to the timber camps scattered along the river. It would make a welcome repast for the men after a continuous menu of sow belly, corn bread, molasses and fox squirrels.

At noon the flight entirely ceased. Our betting had

come to an end. But as we were even, we decided on remaining a little while longer. No doubt we could decide the winner on the arrival of another flock.

### The Lone Shoveller.

How, unseen or unheard, that shoveller ever got into the pond, neither could explain. Billy and I discovered him simultaneously, swimming about leisurely twenty yards from our blind, evidently perfectly contented with the surroundings. He certainly anticipated no danger. No alertness marked his deportment; rather perfect unconcern.

"Greenhead?" "Naw," the Ozarker exclaimed. "Spoonie—spoonbill," I corrected. "Spoonie, nothing!" after closer examination Billy irrefutably declared, "hits nary a greenhead, hits a duck."

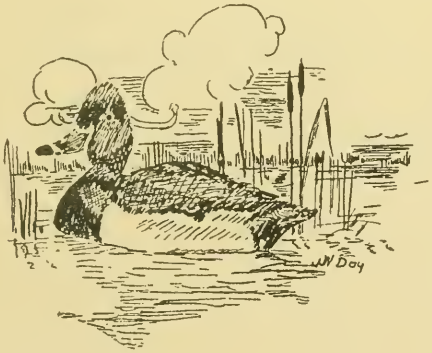
"Yes, Billy, it's a duck," I agreed, and added, "by all means a duck. Whatever kind you want to call it, its the last shot. Its on the left, swimming toward me. My shot. So I win, see." Then I yelled at that broadbill at the top of my voice.

According to savants, bluewings and canvasbacks have it on every kind of ducks in speed. I am sure none of them ever estimated the velocity attained by a thoroughly frightened shoveller. The moment that spoonie heard my voice he turned a little, took instant alarm at our blind, but rose slowly, as if in no haste whatever to get away from such evil sounding noise. He achieved the first 20 yards in a manner that made me think him

a cripple. Then he caused me suddenly to change my opinion, hitting it up into unbelievable speed.

Still I felt confident, exultant in the prowess of my twenty gauge. I fired twice. A single feather was my recompense. But I did gaze in chagrin at that speed devil eating up distance; 40, 50, 60, perhaps 70 or 80 yards. He gained far more rapidly than I could estimate. Then the 12 L. C. Smith of the Ozarks sounded the note of exploding nitro powder.

All at once the shoveller crumpled up and crashed stone dead against a sycamore top across Current River.



# AN ALBERTA DAY

PAUL E. PAGE

PUSHING my boat into a point of rushes in an Alberta lake in the gray of a frosty September morning last fall, there was a tinkle of breaking ice and a shower of white frost from the rushes as the boat pressed them to one side.

I had set out my decoys consisting of nine ducks, no two alike, and one black sea brant. These I had borrowed from the farmer with whom I was stopping, who told me he had had them from his father, who used them on the salt water marshes, years before, in eastern Canada. One was interesting to me, it being made out of cork with a wooden head fastened to the body with two copper nails, with ends split and driven through the body and clinched over the weight lead on the bottom. It was about the size of a bluebill but what it was painted to represent I could not guess, as I never before saw any bird like it either awake or in dreams.

In front of my blind was an open strip of water, perhaps eighty yards wide. To the north this open water extended for a quarter of a mile and to the south a good half mile. Back of me was a solid bed of rushes clear to the shore of the lake cut through by one narrow strip of

water through which I had made my way to the blind. Out in front and beyond the fringe of rushes that bordered the strip of open water there was a continuation of rushes and open patches of water for nearly a mile. The map showed the lake to cover some five thousand acres.

To the south and distant some two miles was another grass lake of about the same size and to the east another of about two hundred acres.

I had come to the lake the evening before over the protest of friends who told me that there was never any shooting on this lake. The location looked good to me on the map and I came in spite of protests. My farmer host told me the evening before that there were a few ducks and now and then a flock of geese on the lake, but not many.

### Waiting for Legal Sunrise.

I amused myself waiting for the legal sunup, by watching the eastern sky. It was a riot of color of ever changing position of clouds. At last came the rim of the sun above the horizon and in a moment it hung a big red ball above the rushes and the realization of a duck hunter's dream was mine. Sunrise and a grass lake in the wilderness of a duck country. Not a bird was to be seen, not even a blackbird.

I watched every foot of the skyline of that marsh for an hour or more and not a living thing did I see.

I thought of the long hard drive I had made over im-

possible roads and the protests of my friends and of the return drive and the "I told you so's" I would have to meet.

I pictured my friends leaving the house at about this time for a day with the sharp-tail grouse and was truly sorry for myself. Had it not have been for that detail map and my stubborn resolve to see that lake, I would have been in the grouse party. The sun was creeping up and every creep sent a wave of warmth through the frosty air. My heavy shooting coat became uncomfortable and I took it off, and later sweater, gloves and hat followed suit. I was just comfortable in a heavy flannel shirt, wide open at the neck, rubber boots kicked off and piled with coat, sweater, hat and gloves in the end of the boat.

An ideal lake, day and month and no ducks. I was the most lonesome and disappointed chap in all Alberta.

### Waterfowl Now Appear.

Suddenly my ear caught the faint "Eleke-ela" of a bunch of brant. High up over the center of the lake they came, their white wings scintillating in the bright sunshine. When opposite me they pitched down in a tangled mass of outstretched legs and necks, and woke the echoes with their chatter.

This unseemly disturbance of the quiet morning appeared to get on the nerves of a hen mallard who was probably having a day dream out in the rushes beyond my blind. At any rate she got up with a loud quack of

protest and started up the lake screaming her opinion of the whole brant family and of that particular bunch. As she flew and talked other ducks followed her from the rushes and in a twinkling a hundred flocks were on the wing. These flying down the center of the lake woke up the laggards in the south end and they rose in a mass and came whirling over the rushes and up the lake.

My first shot doubled up a lone widgeon and at the report of the little 16-gauge, ducks jumped from the rushes as far as the eye could see. They came by me in singles, doubles, flocks and droves. Great flocks of blue-winged teal swept by over the open water, hundreds in a flock and less than 40 yards from the blind. Big grain-fed mallards flew by and over the blind and looked down in wonder at this unknown invader of the marsh that was making so much noise. There were redheads in bunches, platoons and brigades. Birds that had never seen a man or heard the report of a gun.

### A Speedy Canvasback.

From far down the lake I spotted a canvasback coming up flying close to the water. He passed me and although I led him all of eight feet at not over 40 yards distance I saw the shot strike in a bunch all of 40 feet behind him. He was away out of range before I could get in another shot. This chap was some speed king, all right. He fairly burned up the air. I saw him alight at the upper end of the open water where he commenced

diving and feeding, and I kept a watchful eye in that direction.

While I was wondering why he did not burn his feathers off with the friction of the air, back he came. It must have been the same bird for no two birds could have been made on his plan. I decided I would send a charge of shot directly in front of him as he was coming head on, jump him up a little and get him as he jumped. I did but he did not. Instead of jumping he speeded up and I was not fast enough to get in the second shot. He evidently tired of my game for he did not come back. If I had anything but slough water I would have rested my foot on the side of the boat and murmured, "Here's to you, old chap."

While watching a bunch of these coming down the lake I heard a low "Honk" behind me and turned just in time to see a big Canada goose coming head on from behind me and just clearing the rushes. I nearly tipped the boat over in my effort to get a shot at him and did center him after he had flown directly over me at not over four feet from my head, and as he was going from me. In spite of the number 1 shot he doubled up a bunch and fell in the edge of the rushes out in front of me, from where he slowly drifted into the rushes.

I was some busy, however. I picked my shots from the hundreds of birds that were almost constantly in range and flattered myself for doing good work. I ripped into a flock of brant that came down the lake, low down, and that turned in to have a look at my sea brant decoy, and

while they were making goose talk about sea brant in general, and got three. They were bunched up at about 30 yards, and I put the first shot into the flock at large and knocked out one. I would like to know where the rest of the ounce of shot in the load went. It did not register and yet the birds could not have been bunched closer.

Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a bluebill making a sneak from behind me and turned in time to double him up and send him with a splash and bound to keep company with my big goose. He hit the water close to where the goose had drifted and much to my surprise here was Mr. Goose sitting up on the water with neck outstretched apparently as wide awake as he ever was. I wanted that goose and pushed the boat out of the blind and poled after him. He could and did swim as fast as I could pole the boat and after chasing him up the lake for two hundred yards or more and not getting within range, I decided to cut through the fringe of rushes and stalk him from the other side and out of his sight. We met head on at the end of the rushes and up he sprang not six feet from the bow of the boat. It took three ounces of number 7 shot to stop him. I picked him up and decided to gather up my other goose and a number of ducks I had in the water before returning to the blind. I shot three mallards, all greenheads, from the boat while on my return.

### Strange Actions of a Goose.

When I got to where the bluebill fell I had trouble in locating him but at last found him and not ten feet from him lay my first goose. The last goose must have swum or flown in without my seeing him and I mistook him for the one I had shot. Just why a normal goose would let me chase him for three hundred yards and nearly run over him with a boat, in open water, before flying, is one of the many strange duck-blind adventures I am unable to fathom.

I got back to the blind in time to see that canvasback person at the upper end of the open water, get up and start my way. I got into swing with him 60 yards before he was in range, led him all of 40 feet at about 40 yards distance and as near as I could tell got him in plumb center of the charge. He never missed a wing beat and sailed on to the lower end of the open water and out of my sight.

There is a murie on the sound where I shoot that does some flying stunts and burns holes in the air and is supposed to outfly anything with wings and I vouch for his being able to go some. There are green-winged teal that move somewhat when they decide to go some place, but this canvasback friend of mine could fly rings around either of them. He sure could fade away and out of the landscape faster than anything I have ever seen.

In an hour I had enough, more than enough, and put away the 16-gauge and took up the 22-automatic. I did,

however, keep the shotgun close at hand where I could grab it in case that greased lightning of a canvasback took a notion to try another round with me.

**Duck Shooting On the Wing With a Rifle.**

Did you ever shoot ducks on the wing with a 22-rifle? Some shooting and some sport where the birds don't know what a gun or man is.

I covered that lake with chunks of lead. Sometimes, a few times, I got a bird I shot at and several times one that got in the way and that I did not shoot at. I did get into the Wild Bill-Dr. Carver class with a big Canada honker. He came drifting down the lake and when opposite me at about 30 yards and 50 feet high I cut into him. He staggered and fell a few feet, gathered himself and started directly away from me. I shot again and again he twisted and fell but gathered himself up and turned in and towards me and crossed to fly around me and back up the lake. I got him on the turn with the third shot and he came down in a lump. I dressed him later and found one shot went through his breast just below his neck, one through his back and out at the wishbone and another through his body in front and close to his legs.

The next shot I doubled up a redhead and nearly landed him in the boat from a straight overhead at all of 60 yards.

I was sure some rifle shot just then. Later I changed my mind about it.

Once in a while when a bunch of mallards swung in to have a closer look at my bunch of outlaw decoys I got results and once I made a double out of a flock and these did not come in any too good either.

It is amazing the amount of room that there is around a big duck. I could pick out a certain feather on one of those big mallards and shoot at that one feather at 30 yards and nothing doing. I might do the same thing at the next bird and get its partner flying several feet behind it and perhaps, but not often, I would get so close to that particular feather that I would commence talking to myself and wondering how Dr. Page would sound.

### Swans Come Into Lake.

While busy spattering lead over the landscape the beautiful trumpet call of a swan came to me and held me spellbound. Four of these great birds were coming into the lake from the south. They started my way and I dropped the rifle; no, not for the shotgun, but the camera. On they came, wheeled in behind me and started for the blind not four feet over the grass.

I twisted and turned and tried my best to get those birds in the finder but could not do so although they swung out over the clear water not 40 yards from me.

I fooled for a hour or more trying my luck with ducks of all kinds and one splendid chance at a large flock of brant but the best I got was some dots that looked like fly specks. All the rest developed blanks.

If I ever hit that lake again I am going to have some kind of a camera gun that I can point at a bird and get results. I tired of the camera and took up the 22 again.

A great number of swans came into the lake and lit. They came from the south and high up. They evidently were coming in for water and for the night.

One bunch of eight sandhill cranes came in and lit on a mud bar.

One big swan, I believe he would have measured 9 feet from wing tip to wing tip, came by the blind at not over 20 yards and less than that number of feet from the water. I covered him with the rifle and I KNOW I could have hit the feather I aimed at and my finger itched to pull the trigger. The Alberta law says hands off of swan and crane and it was hands off with me.

### Runs Out of Shells.

There is an end to everything and the end came for me when I ran out of 22 shells.

I shot 250 and got fourteen ducks and one goose. Not much of a record, and yet some record. Try it sometime.

I picked up my ducks and poled to shore where I was met by my host. He looked over my back-breaking load of ducks and geese. I do not remember of saying how many ducks I shot with that shot gun. He said, "If you want to get some good shooting, try Buffalo Lake. My brother lives there and I will give you a note to him."

Some good shooting! I wonder what he calls shooting. Two hundred and fifty picked shots at ducks at not over

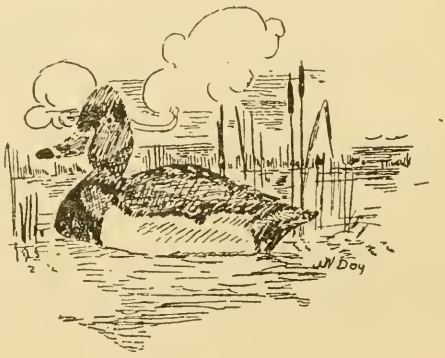
40 yards away, a few geese thrown in for good measure; not quite as many shots with a shot gun, and a hundred or more flocks shot at and fluked at with a camera is some little day's shooting.

If you have not already done so, try this rifle duck-shooting game sometime when you get where ducks are tame. No use to try it on birds that have been shot at until they are wild, as they jump too much and when they do, it is out of the question to get them covered and when you do get a bird under such conditions you do not feel as if you had done anything but a lucky fluke.

Hurrah—my friends ran over their best dog and put him in the dry dock for a week and only got three sharp-tail.

I am the duck sharp in that bunch right now and my map has moved up to the head of the class.

There were no "I told you so's" when I got back that same evening.



# MILLIONS OF DUCKS

CLARK McADAMS

HE is a brave duck shooter who will take his family, his dog and a good duck-shooting friend along and try to make from St. Louis a point so far away as Corpus Christi, Texas, where he has a beautiful boat with a crew of four men placed at his disposal for the prosecution of this thrilling sport.

I had the courage to try that, and we got there, dog and all, three days following Christmas, 1919, after a trip which none of us shall forget. We had the dog in the baggage car, and fed him ham sandwiches at 15 cents each all the way down. However, we made it. The dog, especially, was glad to get there. It was something more than a dog's life. The day trip down from Houston was enlivened by acquaintance with another duck shooter who lived some place below Corpus. His wife, who was with him, said he was "an old huntin' fool," and was never home Sundays, which amused us—and him.

We all know that type of man. This fellow had hunted in the Texas Coast country for years. He had crawled over half the Texas flat on his stomach. He had bearded pneumonia in many a wet boot, and his face had the weather-beaten look of one whose home is the blind. We saw ducks in every pond and puddle along the way. Once

we saw a bunch of brant covering acres. They were sitting in a field not far from the train, and three duck shooters almost fell out of the window estimating their number. We could not agree on it, so I cannot tell you how many there were.

### A Magnificent Yacht.

Mr. Pulitzer, who knew what would cure me—I had been ill for a month—had sent his yacht, the Granada II, down from Rockport. It was lying in the bay at Corpus when we got there. It was a beautiful specimen of the art of boat building. It carried a skipper, an engineer, a sailor and a cook. We got there in the evening, and lay there that night, having dinner in the dining saloon, whence we looked out on the wreck of the great summer storm which had ravaged the coast a few months before and dealt a terrible blow to Corpus Christi, now rising courageously from her ruins.

The Captain said we would see plenty of ducks. There were millions of them—which we could not, of course, comprehend at the time, having never seen ducks in any such numbers.

Well, we were to see them. You know how a duck shooter sleeps in that pleasant prospect. There was just enough of a swell to rock us to sleep. Strangely enough, I began to feel better the moment the Captain told me how many ducks we would see, and that night I slept as I had not slept in a month. We were under way when I got up the next morning. The Corpus Bay is fifteen by

twenty miles in extent—a blue and beautiful piece of water, now shining under a summer sun. Bluebills, which do not object to diving upwards of fifteen feet for their feed, rose ahead of us and circled past the windows while we were at breakfast. Porpoises rolled out of the water around us. Of course, we were not having a good time or anything like that, and were not exclaiming the pelicans, plover, cormorants and the profusion of wild life which one sees on the Texas Coast in winter.

### Vast Number of Waterfowl.

It was 11 o'clock when we lay to beside an oyster flat twenty miles above Corpus. The Captain picked up his glasses and studied a black mass on the flat a mile away.

"There's a pretty good bunch of ducks," he said. "We'll shoot them this afternoon."

Ben and I looked at them.

"How many ducks would you say are there?" Ben asked the Captain.

The man who knows more about ducks than ducks know about themselves, took the glasses again and swept the bunch.

"About thirty thousand," he said.

I caught Ben, who would have fallen overboard.

Thirty thousand!

We all looked at them—my wife and Elizabeth. Even Prince surveyed them and wagged his tail. They were on a flat where the water was only inches deep, and were feeding upon the grass which grows under water all over

those flats. They pull it up and eat the roots, which make them so fat that oftentimes, dropping from a considerable height, they literally pop open.

We have become so accustomed to reading how ducks are slaughtered in the south through the winter months that we scarcely ever expect to see again any duck that goes down there. That is for the most part myth. It is quite true that ducks are abundant in winter throughout the south—I have seen great shoals of them in the Bay of Panama in February—but that is a vast country in which to range, hunters are comparatively few, and, thanks to the federal bird law, the markets are gone. In nine days on the Texas Coast we saw only one other hunting boat. There were millions of ducks, but they were little hunted. The south earned its bad name fairly enough in the days before the federal government stepped in to do what state governments would not do. They still have more duck shooting than we have, since the ducks winter there; but conditions between a coast and an inland country cannot be equalized in shooting any more than they can be equalized in fishing, and the season in the south is fifteen days shorter than it is with us. It opens November 1st, and ends January 31st.

Nor is it true that duck shooting in the south is not work, just as it is here, or that it does not have its days when there is nothing to shoot. With all the ducks there, one is never with any assurance of getting very many of them. They either "work" or don't "work," as the guides express it. On days when they don't work there

would just as well not be any ducks. One sees them in great clouds, but they never come near.

It was after 1 o'clock when the launch came alongside for the hunt on the flat where the thirty thousand redheads and pintail were waiting for us. We towed behind us the lighter boat with the hundred odd redhead decoys and the sprigs of sweet bay which are always stuck around the boat in that country to make a blind.

We were all set by 2 o'clock. It was a lovely day, with a light breeze from the Gulf, the waters everywhere blue and dancing, the yacht lying white and serene a mile away in deep water, Prince gathered for the first falling duck, and an occasional bluebill trying to tempt us. They hold bluebills and spoonbills in contempt on the Texas Coast.

### "Dusty" as a Duck Caller.

The center seat held "Dusty," who whistles at sprigs and sputters at redheads. "Dusty" whistling at sprigs is part of one's education upon these Texas trips. One learns by listening to him to know how near they are, what they are doing, and about what the chance or mischance has become. Thus, if "Dusty" begins whistling shrilly and then tones off into softer and even tender tones of seductiveness, one instinctively clutches one's gun and gets ready to shoot. Upon the other hand, if "Dusty" begins shrilly, tones off more gently for a bit and then becomes even more shrill, one knows the sprigs have started to come and then thought better of it.

"Dusty" is an artist, and the artist's temperament is his. He never gives up a bunch of sprigs without a final shrill whistle, a very blast of disgust, which seems to mean "Damn you!"

The scheme upon which ducks are hunted down there is to find them feeding upon a flat, chase them off, and then wait for them to return. That was what we did upon that first afternoon—we waited for them to return. Out on the flat below us somewhere were thirty thousand redheads and pintail supposed to come back, but for an hour after we set out we did not see any sign that they were going to do so. It sometimes happens with such a bunch of ducks that when they come back they all come at once, and that was what they did upon this occasion. From a duckless sky our vision passed to the amazing spectacle of a sky covered by ducks. They came as straight for us as if they meant to resume feeding where they left off when we got them up. It was a thrilling moment in the little shelter of green bay, where two men and a dog waited feverishly for the game to come within range. "Dusty" began to whistle and sputter. Presently he said, in that calmness always noticeable about anyone in a blind who is without a gun:

"Three redheads coming in on the right."

We thrust our heads up cautiously.

Z-z-z-z-z-p!

Ben sent two barrels after them, and I somehow came to in time to give them the left barrel far out.

I got one which Prince was out after like a shot through

the side of the blind, and which he pounced upon in the clear water and fetched to us with that dispatch for which a duck shooter loves the trained Chesapeake.

It was a redhead drake, a duck in that region even heavier than our own mallard, a beautifully-plumaged, fast-flying, delicious duck—the ne plus ultra of the Texas Coast.

That was my opportunity to seem wise and expert, since I had shot down there before and Ben had not.

"You'll get onto it," I said. "They fly faster than the ducks at home."

Ben said nothing, but the look in his face prepared me for what happened upon several occasions thereafter, when he wiped my eye good for me.

### A Great Hour's Sport.

Then the darkness of thirty thousand ducks came upon us, and we lit up the feathered dusk with the flash of our guns. It was the kind of duckshooting one has always heard about. Prince flew here and there over the flat, catching the cripples and fetching the dead. He would start after a high-flying pintail when the duck began to slant down, and would fetch them an eighth of a mile. There was an hour when we were the busiest two, me and a dog, you ever heard tell of, when "Dusty" was whistling and sputtering like one of the paint pots in Yellowstone Park, and when there were always from fifty to a hundred flocks of ducks about. We had twenty-seven fat ducks in the boat when the launch put out from

the yacht to pick us up. It all happened in an hour, but what an hour!

Ben and I relived that hour on the way back to the yacht. We have relived it many times since. When Prince is dozing, with his fine head upon his great webbed forepaws and his eyes half closed, he is reliving that hour, too. We are all hunters, whether men or dogs, and our sensations and memories are the same.

It was something to see the sun set across Corpus Bay as we made our way back to the yacht that evening. It must have been that great golden sun, laying its mantle of gold upon the very Gulf itself, that betrayed the wealth of the New World to the lust of the Old. That was the sun of Cortez and Pizarro—the sun of the galleons and the conquistidores—the great, golden, tell-tale sun following which, from "a peak in Darien," Balboa first looked upon the Pacific!

Gray shadows of dusk were circling the yacht as we ran alongside and climbed the ladder to the deck. It had been chilly and wet out there as the launch bobbed about on the rising sea. You have felt the warmth and cheer of a club house upon coming in from a cold hunt. Then you can imagine the luxuriance at this hour of the Granada II, whose lights invited the hunter home from the chase, and where all was dry and snug for the night. You could hardly say Jack Robinson in the time it took us to step out of our rubber boots and our mackintoshes that night and line up around the table in the dining room, where (hush, boys!) we opened the ceremony with

a good Scotch highball. What is to become of duck-shooting now that one is supposed to give that sort of thing up?

While we had been hunting the Captain had taken the dingy over to a flat where he saw the gulls and pelicans working in a school of mullet and caught a dozen fine sea trout. The mullet sees the flat, the trout sees the mullet, the gulls see the trout, and the fishermen sees the gulls. That was the way Prince and I figured it, after reflecting amusedly upon how we came by that delicious morsel at dinner this first day out.

### Sam's Skill as a Chef.

Before dinner is served I must present Sam. The sight of Sam's black arm coming up out of the cook's galley and holding upon high a great platter of roast duck, or boiled crabs, or oysters upon the half shell, became so often the inspiration of shrill cries of delight in that dining saloon during the trip that I must tell you something of Sam, whose father cooked ducks for a club down there in years gone by and who was himself cook for an officers' mess with our army in France.

I always said that Sam cooked for General Pershing —that while it was true the General had never come in for it, still it was there for him, and it was no fault either of Sam or Sam's cooking that he never came.

He would have enjoyed it, for Sam is such a cook as one thinks of reverently upon rising from a display of his art. A great epicure is less than the cook who

makes that reputation for him. Thus, we know who Epicurus was; we know the friends attracted to his board, but we do not know who cooked the food that made him famous, any more than we know the hero of those repasts which Lucullus served to the undying glory of his name and the eternal estate of an art in admiration of which Horace burst into song and in awe of which the world has stood in awe for more than twenty-five centuries.

I don't want anything of that sort to happen here. I want to do what neither Epicurus nor Lucullus was sportsman enough to do, and try to make Sam's name live, as it deserves to live; for throughout that voyage he made available a feast beside which that at which Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall was no more than an early cafeteria.

Nor was Sam's skill as a cook wasted upon the Texas Coast. When we lay beside one of the oyster flats we had only to go out and pick up fresh oysters in plain sight through the shallow water. We had only to take a sack and fill it with stone crabs drawn from their holes among the oyster shells by that quick flip of the wrist which renders this perilous sport nothing to the man who knows how to do it. We had only to fish about the boat to supply ourselves with sea trout and sheepshead. We had only to go hunting for ducks, and plover swarmed about us in such incredible numbers that we had only to walk along the shore and shoot what we could eat.

### We Eat Some Ducks.

That was what there was to cook. In nine days eight of us, counting the four men in the crew, ate eighty ducks. Ben usually ate two ducks at dinner. We picked the meat out of crabs until the claws and backs were piled up before us so high we couldn't see each other. Sometimes we began with oysters on the half shell, working on through crab gumbo, thence into cold boiled crabs, and then on to roast ducks. We were all fat enough to kill when we came off the boat. It was an incredible feast incredibly cooked, and it went on incredibly day after day. I don't want to torture you with it, so I shall say no more about it.

The most ducks we killed in one day was forty-two. That day they came to us in a high wind which made shooting difficult enough to be great sport in spite of the fact that ducks were abundant. Once when a pair of pintails came in over the decoys Ben killed his duck and then killed mine while I was figuring my windage. You may be sure I cursed him for that. The windage is important down there much of the time. It is amazing how far one must lead a duck going down wind, and it is laughable to discover how easily one can shoot alongside a duck fairly hovering in the air. We experimented one windy day upon a target in the water. The wind swept the shot as if it were sand. Would you believe that a duck as big as a peacock and within fair range could be hard to hit out there in the sunshine, where you can see

the color of its eyes? Yet it can be so, and it does one good to find it out. We are all more or less expert at the particular shooting to which we are accustomed. It is when we encounter shooting to which we are not accustomed that we begin to have less faith in our natural unerringness and appreciate best what other men know. A Texan down there on the coast can shoot around us in the wind until we don't know whether we are afoot or horseback.

Every day we were down there we saw the same innumerable host of ducks. We could not use more than we could eat, so we shot only part of every day. The rest of the time we cruised about, or enjoyed our ease upon the yacht. It was on the last day that we really saw ducks. We thought we had seen ducks every day, but when we looked out across the flat that last morning we realized we had not seen any ducks up to that time.

The Captain said the bunch we had before us was two and a half miles long and in some places half a mile wide. It looked as if all the redheads and pintail in the world had congregated to bid us farewell. We did not intend shooting that day, since we had all the ducks we could bring home. Nevertheless, we were on deck most of the time before we set sail for Corpus Christi, and much of that time was given to a pleasant survey of that astonishing field of ducks.

There were literally millions of them!

Even Prince said very plainly, wig-wagging his tail: "Some ducks!"

### Apostrophe to the Duck.

There was nothing to do but apostrophize them, so I did that. I stood on the deck of the yacht as we set out for home and said this to them:

"Friends, redheads, pintails!

"I and my wife, my child Elizabeth, my friend Ben and my dog Prince bid you farewell.

"We have enjoyed meeting you, and hope sometime to see you again.

"Meanwhile, peace be with you.

"Take care of yourselves.

"You are numerous, like the sands of the sea, and a lot of us have worked hard to make you like that.

"We have tried to limit the sport of hunting you to the bounds of decency in our own country, and have induced Canada to do the same thing.

"We have put the market hunter out of business.

"We have closed the cold storage plant.

"We have stopped raiding the breeding ground for duck eggs.

"This is our reward—millions of ducks—ducks until one would not believe it except one saw it.

"Hail, innumerable, inspiring and incredible host!

"Hail, twice hail—

"Hail and farewell!"

That, I thought, met the occasion. We stood out across Corpus Bay, and presently the great flock of ducks two

miles and a half long became as a speck on the smiling face of the sea. We made Corpus Christi at noon, had our last lunch aboard, and then went ashore.

### Sympathizes With Adam.

It was not until we stood on the wharf that afternoon and watched the Granada II disappearing across the blue bay on her way back to Rockport that I understood how Adam felt when he was kicked out of the Garden of Eden.

I for the first time in my life felt as he did, and it was no surprise to me that so much of a rumpus has been raised about it. It really was something.

What must one say of the number of ducks wintering upon that coast? Does it mean that ducks are increasing, and that after all the years of seeming to protect them but really getting nowhere we have at last found out how they can be saved—not for ourselves alone, but for men to come!

I think that is what it means. The number of ducks everywhere in the country last Fall astonished everybody. Let us hope it prepared us for next Fall, when we otherwise probably would not believe it.

# OPENING DAY IN NORTH DAKOTA

EDWARD C. WARNER

THERE have been so many mournful laments of late regarding the passing of our waterfowl that sportsmen may welcome any evidence showing the duck hunter's "days of real sport" are still with us. It was my good fortune to enjoy one of the "good old days" on September 16, 1920, on the North Dakota prairies way up near the Canadian boundary.

With me in the party were Archie Sillers, banker, of Calvin, North Dakota; James Shea, former United States marshal of North Dakota, and William Moran, hotel proprietor of Calvin. After a hurried 4 o'clock breakfast we started out in Mr. Sillers' auto for the fifteen-mile ride across the prairies. In passing, I would like to remark that anyone who has never experienced the exhilaration of the bracing Dakota air on a September morning has missed one of the real joys of life. Our destination was the farm of Joseph Webster, who had extended us an invitation to come out and open the season on his "duck pasture."

We arrived at the farm just as the roosters were sounding their first clarion calls. Everyone piled out of the auto and I started toward the marsh, but someone in the party reminded me that it would be an hour before sun-

rise. So we found a sheltered spot by the side of the barn and spent the time listening to "Jim" Shea recount experiences of nearly a half century back when he was a scout under Custer, and tell tales of the northwest when Dakota was still a territory, and you could travel forty miles without seeing a white man.

Presently a pink glow began to appear in the east, and the wheat shocks across the slough took on a hazy shape. And then there was heard such a quacking and squawking of mallards as though all the ducks in the world, in convention assembled, had gathered to refute the idea that the glorious days of the wildfowl were gone forever. And now our blood began to tingle in anticipation of what was in store for us. We got up and started for the marsh, each one solemnly adjuring the others not to shoot before the proper time.

### A Real Duck Paradise.

The slough which ran through Mr. Webster's farm was a continuation of a marsh about ten miles in length, filled with grass and rushes, and a paradise for mallards. Bill Moran and I stationed ourselves at one end of the slough, Jim Shea and Mr. Sillers going to the opposite end. By the time we had got set the sun had risen and a few moments later a "boom, boom" came from a distant point at the head of the marsh. This was the signal for us to start. A pair of blue-wing teal came whizzing by and I made a "double." My great self-satisfaction was short-lived, however, as another pair which followed a moment

later was missed with both barrels. At the sound of the shots the ducks arose from the slough with a noise like the roar of a waterfall. In consternation at such an invasion of their domicile they flew over our heads in every direction, voicing their protests with an incessant quacking. The mallards flew away, returning later on in flocks varying from a half dozen to a hundred. I had found a dry spot where the rushes afforded a good natural blind, and for the next two hours had the best sport that I have ever known. There were teal, sprig, mallards and a few stray canvasback; in fact, almost every kind of duck found on inland waters.

There was no waiting for shots for more than a few moments. Moran and I had the good fortune to select the best location and the birds were so plentiful that we scorned the small ducks and waited for the mallards and other large ducks. After the first half hour, during which numerous misses afforded an equal number of opportunities for mutual sarcastic comments, the "wire edge" was finally worn off. By 9 o'clock we had both secured almost our limit, without counting a considerable number of birds which could not be found in the tall grass. My shells had run out and Bill's had dwindled to a mere half-dozen, which he insisted on sharing with me. If anyone can furnish a better illustration of the height of generosity than sharing your last half dozen shells when the greenheads are flying over in easy range, I should like to know what it is.

### Forty-Nine Ducks Day's Bag.

With remaining ammunition we finished our "limits" and started for the farmhouse. As we arrived, our companions came in with fine bags, and we laid them in a common pile and counted them. There were forty-nine altogether, a large part of them mallards. We could easily have brought in as many more before noon. I spent a number of days at this same slough during the season and brought in, all told, nearly one hundred ducks. This marsh held an added attraction, in that there were jacksnipe in abundance, and if the ducks were not flying it was an easy matter to get the limit of "jacks" in an hour. In fact, on the opening day of the season they were so plentiful that one might have killed a couple of dozen simply by shooting them as they flew over, and without moving from the duck blind.

On the evening of our first day's duck shoot I remarked to Bill Moran at the hotel that some time I was going to write up an account of the day's sport. "Well," said he, "if you do, you won't need to color it up any; I guess nobody could write up just what we saw, but if he could it would make some of the old timers sit up and take notice." And I agreed with him.

And so, let those who will, talk of the "good old days" of duck hunting. As for me, my "red letter" days date back only to September, 1920.

# DUCK SHOOTING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ROBERT E. ROSS

THE SPORT of duck shooting in Southern California has seen many changes since the year 1887, when I first began shooting. In that year and for some time subsequently there were no laws of any kind protecting the birds, no bag limit, and, with one exception, no duck clubs.

In the immediate vicinity of Los Angeles there was then a good bit of marsh land, and a number of ponds and lakes, on which wildfowl of all descriptions were plentiful.

The shooting was open to all who asked permission of the ranch owners, and who observed common decency in being careful of fences and cattle.

At that time Los Angeles was a small town; now it is a city of almost 700,000 souls. Many of the marshes and lakes have been drained, the open season is three and one-half months, the bag limit twenty-five, and practically the only shooting to be had near the city is on the preserves of the ducking clubs, of which there are now many.

I have kept an almost unbroken record of my shooting for the past thirty-three years, and in looking over my old journals I am impressed by the way in which the shooting has kept up here.

The birds apparently are as plentiful as ever, though their feeding and resting grounds have been so much restricted of late years that fewer stop here throughout the Winter season than formerly.

I shot for thirteen years in one club, which had a membership of fifteen, when the total annual bag for the club probably averaged nine thousand duck. That was when the bag limit was fifty. That club is still shooting, and enjoying excellent sport, and its preserve is only an hour's run by motor car from Los Angeles.

In the almost thirty years of its existence perhaps 200,000 duck have been bagged on its preserve.

### Great Flight of Pintail.

On September 1, 1917, I was shooting doves in a field near the coast about three miles south of Long Beach. For more than three hours that afternoon I watched an unbroken flight of southbound sprigs (pintails) traveling down the coast, and turning inland at a point a little less than a mile south of the field in which I was shooting doves. Yes, the ducks are still with us, and under the wise provisions of the Federal Migratory Bird Act, I think they will be for generations to come.

To give the eastern duck shooter an idea of Southern California duck shooting as it was in the good old days of the nineties, and as it is at present, I will select from my journals two days, which are perhaps typical of the sport then and now.

## Old-Time California Duck Shoot.

In November of 1893 I was shooting in a club which had its preserve in Orange County, about sixty miles south of Los Angeles. The marsh was located on the banks of the Santa Ana River, about three miles inland from the coast.

The preserve controlled by the Greenhead Club was only a few hundred acres in extent, but the marsh of which it is a part spread out for thousands of acres—tule land, threaded with sloughs and dotted with ponds and "holes" in the tules.

The club house was located on the southerly side of the marsh, on the edge of a line of low bluffs that formed the southerly boundary of the tule lands.

At the foot of this bluff so thick was the growth of tule, and so compactly had the fallen tules matted, that a sort of natural dam was formed, and the river, meeting this obstruction, backed up its waters into a shallow lake covering perhaps three or four hundred acres.

It was from stands in the tules on the border of this lake that our shooting was done.

On the November day in question six guns were shooting, and six fine bags were hung on the north wall of the cabin before noon. The birds were mainly widgeon, with a sprinkling of teal, mallards, and sprigs.

While we were eating our noonday meal, a heavy wind began to blow—a wind which we call here the "Santa Ana," but which should be called the "Cajon," for it

roars down the pass of that name, and generally blows for three days, and with high velocity.

The birds had been pretty well driven out of the marsh by the morning's shooting, and had gone to raft at sea; where ordinarily the bulk of them would have remained until evening, riding in immense bands, acres in extent, about a mile beyond the line of breakers.

But when the Santa Ana started to blow, flocks of ducks began pitching into the marsh and whirring down to the lake again in clouds and battalions.

The sight of the returning birds, and the howl of the wind, increasing every moment, was a big temptation to stay another night, and take the next morning's shoot. It was a temptation that Kenneth and I did not try to resist; we sent our morning's bag back to town with the rest of the boys who were returning, and we decided to remain over.

That afternoon we amused ourselves for awhile watching the incoming birds, and spying out with field-glasses the masses of birds banked in the lee of the sheltering tules.

### Getting Ready for Sport.

About an hour before sunset we loaded every decoy we could find into a light skiff, or "tule splitter," as that type of boat is called, and wading along the edge of the lake, we pushed the skiff to a point well up towards the head of the lake, where the river divided into several shallow channels.

Here we constructed of dead cockle-burrs an inconspicuous blind, circular in form, and left in it two wooden shell boxes for seats.

The decoys, a hundred or more, we set in two stools, hour-glass fashion, the smaller stool heading up wind from the blind.

Then we went back to the cabin, had supper, a night cap or two, and turned into the bunks, the wind howling like a lot of demons loosed from the pit, and making the cabin to rock and groan like a labouring ship.

It seemed to me I had just gone to sleep, when Sarnow, our Alsatian keeper, was shaking me by the shoulder and calling "4 o'clock!"

After a hot breakfast, Kenneth and I bundled into heavy sweaters and shooting jackets, jammed our caps down tight, and carrying our guns and a plentiful supply of shells, with the howling wind at our backs, stumbled along in the darkness to our blind prepared the evening before. As we labored along the treacherous edge of the lake, stumbling now and then over unseen roots, we put up great bands of ducks, which were caught up and whirled off in the darkness by the fierce wind, their protesting quacks and calls drowned by the blast.

We reached the blind shortly before dawn, and seating ourselves on the wooden shell boxes, we opened the shell cases, to have our ammunition supply with easy reach. Kenneth was shooting an L. C. Smith twelve, and I a Parker twelve.

The east was flushed with crimson—an angry red, due

to the dust raised by the Santa Ana. Great banks of tules, standing black against the east, were whipped almost level by the screaming wind. We were cold, even in our heavy sweaters and jackets.

Bands of birds were constantly flashing over us, blown like down before the wind, or else with laboring pinions and making poor headway, bravely trying to breast it.

### The Shooting Begins.

Kenneth, rubbing his hands to keep warm, leaned over and howled in my ear: "Let's take only 'bull' widgeon." I nodded "All right." It was light enough to see the colors on the birds—to distinguish the different species. It was time to shoot. Heading towards us, upwind, and moving slowly, was a band of perhaps fifty widgeon, necks outstretched, pinions beating rhythmically, the white sploches on the wings of the drakes plainly discernable in the dawning light. Kenneth and I half rose. Two sharp cracks—the bark of 3½ drams of Schultze—followed by two more, and four birds crumpled, were caught by the wind, and landed in the marsh grass 20 yards back of the spot where they had met the charge of shot.

The four reports caused great bands of widgeon and other fowl to rise from the marsh down wind from us, and these birds began beating up the wind and passed in a steady stream over us, not more than 30 yards high.

For awhile the shooting was as fast as the two of us could load and fire, and with a proper allowance for the

drift of the shot, it was perhaps the easiest and prettiest sport we had ever enjoyed.

The birds were not all widgeon. There were many swirling flocks of teal, strings of mallard and pintail, and the ever-present shoveller. But we passed them all up for the widgeon, and on these tried only for the drakes—"bulls," we called them then.

Steadily the wind hummed and roared over the marsh, and steadily the layers of shells in our cases grew lower. Still the wonderful flight continued—the birds were unwilling to beat to sea, which was then too rough for them to raft on.

We kept careful count of the fallen birds. A little before 9 o'clock Kenneth called to me: "I have fifty-six down. Let's stop." I had counted fifty-one to my gun. We drew the charges from our guns, left them in the blind, and went out to gather the birds.

Half an hour later, when we had scoured the marsh grass in a wide circle about the blind, we had piled up our morning's bag, and started to string them on the straps. There were 104 widgeon, and all "bulls" save three!

Sarnow had been watching our shooting through the glasses from the shelter of an old shed on the bluff, and seeing us gathering in the birds he came out to the blind and slung one heavy strap-full across his shoulder. The other strap Kenneth and I slung on a willow sapling, and so the three of us trudged it back to the cabin, turn-

ing our heads sidewise to breathe, for the gale drove the breath back in our teeth when we faced it.

When we had rested a bit and loaded the birds in the wagon for the drive back to Santa Ana, we walked to the edge of the bluff and swept the lake and marshes with the glasses. There were apparently more birds than ever; great banks of fowl formed dark splotches in the lee of every wall of tule and sheltering bank, while in the air, on a level with us as we stood on the bluff, great flocks were still battling with the "Santa Ana."

### Modern California Duck Shooting.

On the evening of October 15, 1919, thirteen of us were gathered in the club house of the Willow Gun Club, with grounds twenty-seven miles south of Los Angeles.

The preserve consists of sugar-beet fields, which are surrounded by dykes, and divided by cross-dykes, much like a checker-board. These fields are flooded after the crop is gathered in September, and for some unknown reason the wild ducks seem partial to them, and flock there in large numbers.

The grounds are bounded on the west by the San Gabriel River, along the banks of which there is a heavy growth of willow. A mile to the east is a much travelled highway—an automobile boulevard along which motor cars are constantly passing. A mile away in another direction is a large beet-sugar factory.

But the proximity of all this activity does not seem to affect the shooting in any great degree, although it certainly robs the sport of—to me—one of its chief charms, and that is an unbroken stretch of marsh or lake with the works of man gloriously missing from the scene!

The blinds are wooden sinkboxes sunk flush with the top of the dykes, and around which rag weeds are planted.

Adjoining the Willow Club grounds on the east and south are two other gun clubs, with preserves formed of artificially overflowed lands.

When we started for the blinds on the morning of the opening of the season, October 16, 1919, ducks were constantly springing from the margins of the ponds as we passed on our way to the pits.

It was slippery work crossing along the dykes in the darkness, but Fred G. and I finally reached our sinkbox a half hour before legal shooting time.

Having laid out a supply of shells on the shelf of the sinkbox, we sat there with pipes aglow, watching the ducks swishing over our heads, and listening to the calls of the birds disturbed in distant ponds by the other shooters taking their positions.

The little sixteen gauge Parkers were loaded with No. 7, as, watch in hand, we waited for the legal half hour before sunrise.

### The Sport Begins.

Some impatient gunner on the Shotover Club south of us anticipated the time by three minutes, and his shot was echoed and answered by a fusillade all over the marsh. It sounded like a sharp skirmish. The air was full of birds, mainly sprig, although there were many teal also.

The birds were bewildered, for this was the opening shoot, and many of them were hearing gunfire for the first time.

The shooting was ridiculously easy for the first hour, and only a dub would have missed taking toll for the hundreds of sprig and teal that were almost constantly passing over the blinds.

After the first hour the shooting quieted down, and most of the birds had left the marsh, driven off by the terrific bombardment.

The early morning fog had vanished, and the sun was shining hot and strong. Not a breath of wind was stirring. Not a bird in sight.

Fred and I waded out in the shallow ponds and gathered our birds. We brought back to the blind thirty-two, and piled them in the shade of some tall cockleburrs.

Suddenly out of the blues came the well-known "scaipe! scaipe!" and two jacksnipe came corkscrewing overhead. Their calls were their undoing, for we were ready for them, and two little "spats" showed where

they had struck the water in a grassy shallow of the pond.

Presently over the fringe of willows to the south we marked a dark line, quickly growing larger. The sprigs were coming back for a drink. Guns began cracking all over the marsh.

It was not such easy shooting now, nor so fast and furious as the first hour. But all the more enjoyable for that. At intervals pairs and singles and small flocks flew by in range, and it was not long before Fred and I had killed the eighteen birds that rounded out our legal limit of fifty for the two guns.

It was hot work tramping back to the club house with the heavy birds. It was certainly not duck weather.

Several of the shooters were already in, and one by one the others came trailing up to the club house.

Almost everyone had "the limit," and 80 per cent of the birds were sprig—as fat as butter, and the drakes indistinguishable from the ducks, for they were still in summer plumage.

An hour later we were in Los Angeles, and the "opening shoot" was a memory.

# DUCKING AT MOON LAKE, LOUISIANA

HARRISON MINGE

AS social woman displays her jewels and arranges the spangles on her gown, likewise is the State of Louisiana bedecked with fresh-water lakes. Of these, perhaps the purest crystal in a liquid broach, not far from the Arkansas line, is Moon Lake, sportsman's mecca of the northern tier of parishes.

The evening of January 20th was warm in temperature and lugubrious in aspect. A warm rain pattered a monotonous dirge upon the cabin shingles at Camp Zephyr, corroding the gayety of four sportsmen who had just come in from Moon Lake. There were many indications, however, that before many hours there would be a great change in the weather.

The next morning a cold wave was closing in upon the South. The huge gray-black cloudbank in the north gradually began to break up, and sections, deploying like icebergs from a glacier, floated across the sky.

Occasional snow flakes, winnowed from the slowly falling sleet, fluttered and swirled like tiny dispatches in the wake of breeze couriers of the retreating warm atmosphere, as the scouts of the Storm King crept forward in the shape of short icy blasts, which growing stronger

and bolder, assailed the thermometer and sent the mercury tumbling.

Presently a rapidly reinforced skirmish line of riotous gusts charged through the forest, driving before them a rout of leaves and twigs and tufts of Spanish moss torn from the gray-bearded live-oak trees, and discharging intermittent volleys of sleet against the camp cabin window panes, with the rattle and roll of musketry.

### Army of Waterfowl Appear.

Suddenly in the somber premature twilight, the anxiously awaited allies of the cold wave appeared. Outlined against the low dark scudding clouds, their white breasts flashing like gaudy uniforms, flock after flock of ducks and geese advanced in line and in echelon, or in great V's and spreading columns, and when over the broad sweep of the lake, wheeled and circled and bunched *en masse,* as they breasted the currents of the gale in graceful evolutions.

Eagerly the hunters watched the feathered army reconnoiter the environs of Moon Lake. A pang of acute regret pierced the heart and a groan of disappointment escaped, when the vanguard, main body and reserves of the winged host, successively melted from sight beyond the murky southern horizon; to be quickly dispelled and succeeded by a wave of buoyant delight and a burst of enthusiastic cheers, when the rear guard, company by company, swept into view, and with cupped wings

dropped from the clouds and pitched behind the cypress brakes—to bivouac amidst the cocklebürs and marsh grass in the various arms and pockets of the lake.

By degrees the mist, ravelled from the skirts of the wind-whipped clouds, turned into fine ice needles; and the edges of each blast, as though whetted and sharpened upon some frigid Aeolian hone, grew keen and penetrating as a new-ground blade.

In the morning our boat reached the blind just as day was breaking—cold and gray. The Major turned his cheek to accurately gauge the wind which began to increase as the sun rose, then directed Lem to row to a position east of the blind.

"Wind's right from the north," he said. "Let's put out our decoys a little to windward of the blind, and string them out to the east—giving them plenty of elbow room because it's going to be rough."

He motioned to Lem to anchor when the position selected was reached.

"Ducks always decoy against the wind," continued the Major, "which is a pointer those flyin' fellows appear to overlook a lot of times when they try to light with their aeroplanes. Today the ducks will skirt the shore line behind us and fetch up in the eye of the wind, with the dull sky for a good background."

### Pintails Inspect Decoys.

While the decoys were being set out, a flock of pintails swooped down silently, rose suddenly with astonished quacks and frenzied flapping of wings when they spied the figures in the boat, then circled round and round, eyeing with unsated curiosity the launching of the decoys, and commenting among themselves upon the remarkable temerity of their tame brethren.

The live decoys disported as merrily as a child in it's bath; diving, fluttering water over their backs and wings, then treading water and flapping themselves dry again. The hens preened their feathers vigorously, apparently wishing to dress their prettiest to insure the attention of the wild drake and the envy of the ladies of his court.

The old drake leader of the decoys swept the horizon with his eye and uttered the low pre-e-l, pre-e-l, pre-e-l of warning.

Cutting our eyes around through the dead willows fringing the blind, we caught sight of a flock of mallards skimming along the shore just above the timber line.

Suddenly the old duck's siren q-u-a-c-k, q-u-a-c-k, quack, quack, quack, followed by the full cry of the decoy flock, turned the mallards toward the blind.

Crouched in breathless suspense, the palpitations of the heart clearly audible, we watched the large flock of mallards approach to about two hundred yards, at which radius they commenced to circle the decoys, which engaged them in animated conversation.

Round and round they circled until the prudent leader of the decoys, tiring of useless gabble, silenced his flock with a disgusted quack. The old fraud refused to engage in further parley unless the wild visitors accepted his assurances and came down for a sociable gossip.

### Ducks Decoy Well.

The mallards, failing to draw him out any more, swept down with the wind, flashed by the blind in a long sweeping curve, and heading up into the wind again, cupped their wings and glided slowly up to the decoys, presenting an easy target.

As the day progressed, guns began to pop and rumble in the arms and pockets, and the ducks, kept constantly on the wing, fell easy prey to the guns and decoys in the open water. Our position proved a veritable Mecca for feathered pilgrims and various kinds of wild ducks became the transient guests of the decoy bathing party, giving full scope to the old drake's knowledge of the peculiarities of species, and a rich field for his talents in playing upon the weaknesses of each.

Garrulous mallards circled and chattered and sailed leisurely into the decoys; clumsy pintails, like the credulous crowd at a circus, rushed pell-mell into the decoy side show; swift-winged teal swept over the decoys with the speed of a rocket, swung around in deep loops exposing fascinating glimpses of white breasts, and boldly approached with headlong vehemence; plump little blue-

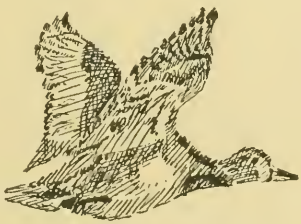
bills pirouetted gayly to their fate; while small flocks of redheads occasionally flew within range, but usually —with suspicions developed by the predatory tutelage of the canvasback buccaneers—glided cautiously down to the water and lit beyond gunshot of the blind.

By one o'clock, having bagged the limit, we signaled Lem, "took up," and returned to camp. In response to Lem's halloo, a little colored boy with eyes as big as saucers, met us at the landing with a buckboard, and the old darky's embellished and illustrated description of the shoot was music as sweet to the ears of the boy as the wind of horn to hound.

As we drove to the cabin the Major asked:

"Lem, have you got room for one of Dinah's dinners of duck and turnip, snowy rice and rich brown gravy, crusty buttered cornbread and cold buttermilk?"

"Look'y here, Boss! Please, sir, doan talk so loud! Ef dat mule hears you, he'll run away wid us shore!"



# LAKE KOSHKONONG—HISTORICAL AND SPORTING

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

KOSHKONONG! World famous lake! Celebrated even in a state where there are many beautiful lakes, great and small. Truly the greatest lake for waterfowl in all Wisconsin, and possessing wondrous natural beauty, admired not only by the hunter, but by all who carry the love of nature in their hearts. No one can view its waters without being thrilled.

What glorious flights of noble white-backs have swept down from the far north on their migrations to find here a haven of rest and food. Redheads, too, and all the countless hosts of migratory waterfowl knew it from a time before a white man ever gazed upon its waters.

The Indians made annual pilgrimages to hunt and fish here, and the squaws gathered wild rice, a valuable article of food with them, and cultivated fields of Indian corn on its shores.

The name Koshkonong is Winnebago, and means "lake we live on." Historical as well as archaeological evidence proves Koshkonong to have been a favorite home of the aborigines. In 1828 an Indian village of 1200 souls was yet upon its banks. They were Pottowatamies, and

the ruling chief was White Crow. They were living in lodges covered with white cedar bark, not wigwams, but huts. Black Hawk passed near Koshkonong several times on his raids, and was finally defeated by U. S. troops on the Mississippi River above Rock Island.

### Size and Location of Lake.

Koshkonong is nine miles long and three miles wide. Innumerable bays stud its shores, and the shore line is from 22 to 24 miles. The bed is an expanse of Rock River, with broad, shallow bays which are bordered with considerable areas of swamp land. The surrounding higher lands consists of great rolling, but irregular morainic knolls, which in places approach the lake shore without a bordering strip of marsh land. The lake lies in Jefferson, Dane and Rock Counties, Wisconsin. The depth of the water is from 4 to 9 feet. It is a large open lake with no islands. The diving ducks can feed anywhere out in the lake, safe from molestation, as it is illegal to shoot in open waters in Wisconsin. Birds will not remain long where shot at on the open water. This results in thousands of ducks arriving early in the season, later being joined by others, until vast numbers are located permanently over the large celery beds. There they remain until driven away by ice closing the lake. The mallards and shoal-water ducks bed in the open lake, visiting the adjoining marshes to feed at night.

When Dr. Lapham visited the lake in 1850 he wrote:— "The water is from 4 to 12 feet deep. At the time of our visit in July, wild rice was growing abundantly over almost its entire surface, giving it more the appearance of a meadow than a lake." Today the wild rice is confined to the shallowest parts of the bays.

### Early History of Koshkonong.

The first man to view Lake Koshkonong was a French explorer, and he was also probably a fur trader.

In January, 1778, Charles Gautier de Verville made a journey from Le Baye (Green Bay) to the River la Roche (Rock River) and finding no Indians at home he was forced to seek them at Prairie du Chien. He writes in his diary: "I fell upon a great lake on River la Roche (Koshkonong) where there had been two villages of Winnebagoes. But they had gone to Prairie du Chien for the winter, where there was a larger settlement."

In 1828 Satterlee Clark arrived at the lake in company with Major Forsyth and Captain Kinzie, who was the first white child born in Chicago. They came by way of Green Bay, by skiff up the Fox to Lake Winnebago, across to Fond du Lac, overland to the Rock at Waupun and down the river to the lake.

Satterlee Clark again visited the lake in 1830. He wrote:

"On the night of September 2, 1830, I slept in an Indian lodge on the east bank of Rock River where Horicon

now stands. I was on my way with White Ox to an Indian settlement at the head of Lake Koshkonong. I was but 14 years of age."

### Mrs. Kinzie Visits Lake.

On her return to Fort Winnebago from Chicago in the spring of 1831, Mrs. Kinzie speaks of her arrival at Man-Eater's village on Lake Koshkonong as follows:

"This day we were journeying in hopes to reach, at an early hour, that broad expanse of the Rock River which here forms the Koshkonong. The wooded banks of the Koshkonong were never welcomed with greater delight than by us. We rode through the beautiful oak openings to Man-Eater's village, a collection of neat bark wigwams, with extensive fields on each side of corn, beans and squashes. In front was the broad blue lake. Near the village and stretching for away to the north the lake was bordered by fine lofty trees.

"We received a visit from White Crow, Last Feather, Yellow Thunder, the Little Priest, and several other of the Rock River Indians. White Crow was the Indian who afterwards distinguished himself as the friend of the whites during the Sauk War."

Charles Thiebeau was a fur buyer for Solomon Juneau in the early 30's. He had two squaw wives and grown up children. More than one visit was made to Thiebeau at Koshkonong by the founder of Milwaukee. Thiebeau disappeared in 1838. Accounts differ as to the manner of his death.

The nearest town of size to Koshkonong is Edgerton, four miles from the lake. The village of Newville is located on Rock River, some little distance down from where it leaves the lake. Rock River is one of the most picturesque streams in the United States.

Ira Bingham is the oldest and most noted hunter of the Koshkonong region. He is a small, wiry man of great vitality. Many of his contemporaries have passed on long since. You fully realize that he is a marksman and man of determination. He attended many large live bird tournaments in the old days, but does not care for target shooting. Ezra, better known as Ed, is a younger brother of Ira. He is well known as a hunter and crack shot. The Bingham farm of several hundred acres is located on Bingham's point, which juts out into Lake Koshkonong. It is a valuable and up-to-date farm with plenty of stock thereon. There is an extensive marsh on one side.

The following interesting data was told me by Ira Bingham on a visit to Koshkonong:

### The Old Timer's Story.

"I am 83 years old. I came here in 1846. In 1858 I began to shoot for the market. I sold 2300 ducks to one man in Janesville from September 15th to November 1st of that year. I used a muzzle loading gun at that time. In 1872 I furnished the Sherman House, Chicago, with several hundred canvasbacks at 50 cents each. I also sold many thousand birds to the Hyatt House, Chicago, then one of the leading hostelries.

"I was the first man to use a scull on Lake Koshkonong. I was also the first man to vote against the use of a scull when a bill came up to prohibit its use, as I saw it was ruining the shooting.

"Following the Civil War Phil Sheridan came here often for the shooting. I have sculled him many times up to flocks of canvasbacks, also shot from the blind with him. He was not a very good marksman.

"In the early days we did not know the birds we killed at Koshkonong were true canvasbacks, and we called them little and big redheads. Later we discovered the difference. Eastern hunters told us that there were no canvasbacks in the west.

"During my career as a hunter I have had some amusing experiences with these who came to shoot at Koshkonong.

"Years ago two leading lights of the legal fraternity, both afterwards prominent on the bench, came annually here as companions for a duck hunt.

"As neither were expert marksmen, they usually hunted with a guide. On one occasion it fell to me to take Judge Conger out for a shoot.

"About two miles down the lake thousands of mallards were feeding in the marsh. We rowed down against a strong wind, and getting back in the flags on the marsh out of the wind somewhat, set out our decoys in a little opening.

"We had routed out many big flocks of mallards on

our arrival, which left for the open waters of the lake. As it was very rough on the lake, I knew they would soon return to more sheltered spots.

### Days of the Old Muzzle Loader.

"This was in the days of the old muzzle loader and ammunition was not always plentiful. We only had about two pounds of shot between us, and it would not take my companion long to shoot away at least half of it, with prospects of small return, as I well knew from observing his marksmanship on previous occasions. I wanted to see him get some birds and had a plan in mind.

"So I said, 'Conger, you lie down in one end of the boat where you will be more comfortable, and let me do the shooting.' He was agreeable. Soon a big flock of mallards swung in against the wind over the decoys. I killed two with the first barrel and one with the second.

"I made every shot count and at the end of an hour we had twenty-five or thirty fine mallards. We pulled up our decoys. I tied the ducks into two equal bunches. We hoisted a little sail I had in the boat and steered for Bingham's Point.

"With the gale blowing it did not take long to reach there. Judge Williams was at the landing to meet us and opened his eyes when he saw the two bunches of ducks we had. I pulled the boat up and laid the heavy bunches of mallards on the shore.

"'Conger, how many of these ducks did you kill?'

asked Judge Williams. 'I killed my share,' replied Judge Conger.

"'Honest, now, Conger, how many of them did you kill?' persisted Judge Williams.

"'I tell you I killed my share,' stoutly asserted Judge Conger, and that is all he would say.

"Judge Williams' suspicions had a good foundation, for Judge Conger had not killed a single bird. Had he admitted it, however, he would have never heard the last of it. I remained silent."

As an evidence of the vast number of waterfowl at Koshkonong in the old days, the veteran sportsman, C. L. Valentine of Janesville, told me: "I have shot at Koshkonong for more than fifty years. On the day on which the steamer Chicora mysteriously disappeared on Lake Michigan, never to be heard from, I bagged 78 redheads at Koshkonong, shooting from a point, and without the use of decoys."

## Last Winnebago Camp.

It is evident that the red men once enjoyed the charming scenery of Koshkonong as thousands of whites have since. The following is by Miss Hannah L. Skavlem of Janesville, whose family spends much time at the lake each season and whose father has closely investigated all early history as well as all mounds, burial places and Indian relics, also the aquatic plants and flora of the lake and adjoining country.

"In one of the lonesomest, most secluded spots on the northwestern shore of the lake in the midst of a wilderness of swampy wood, close beside the banks of Koshkonong creek, stands all that remains of Lake Koshkonong's last Indian village. It is as if nature herself would keep sacred this last vestige of a bygone race—it is so completely hidden under a cenotaph of green. Through the dense foliage the sunlight falls in a glimmering golden shower that illuminates but scarcely dispells the melancholy gloom of the interior, which contains the denuded frames of a few scattered wigwams and a debris of whitening bones and mouldering tatters of fur, rush mats and pieces of clothing.

### Personnel and Peculiarities.

"Until within the last few years a small band of Indians (Winnebago) from the northern part of the state have wintered here, but in the spring of 1895, they broke up camp for the last time and Koshkonong knows them no more. Their camp or village numbered five lodges and their band was composed of the members of three separate families. These were Charlie Decorah and his squaw—Charlie was about 50 years old and the 'medicine man'—Moses Decorah, squaw, and three papooses; Henry Decorah and squaw. Henry was the learned man of the party, and could read and write English fairly well; Charlie Green and squaw, and War Club, squaw, and one papoose.

"Old Grandma Decorah, mother of Charlie, Moses and Henry Decorah, appeared to be at least 100 years old and was so crippled and bent that she could not walk. She seemed to be well cared for by her sons. Charlie Green's mother was also a very old squaw but remarkably smart and active. With old mother Green lived her daughter, a comely dame apparently some years past the meridian of life. She was the one and only bachelor maid in the community.

"Their domestic relations were of a superior quality inasmuch as they lived very peacefully together. Occasionally to vary the monotony of the connubial felicity or perhaps in imitation of the ways of their white brothers, there would be (without recourse to the law, however) an amicable exchanging of wives. They appeared to be honest Indians.

### Sang the Death Song.

"The last Indian burial was in the spring of 1894, when the little son of Moses Decorah died. For several nights before and after the death of the child, the old trees that line the banks of Koshkonong creek and stand sentinel over the abandoned village echoed the death song of perhaps the last Indian who will ever take his departure to the happy hunting grounds in truly aboriginal style. For a burial casket they cut in two one of their canoes in which little Mose Decorah now sleeps in the Sumner cemetery."

# RANDOM NOTES ON DUCK SHOOTING

PAUL E. PAGE

FORTUNATE in an acquaintance numbering a great many men who are votaries of the sport of wild-fowling, I can count on the fingers of one hand those who are proficient in the art of calling ducks. The ordinary duck call, of whatever make or pattern—and there are many—is usually worse than useless as it comes from the hands of the manufacturer. To be a really good call it needs to be practically remade by an expert—the wooden cylinder thinned down, the reed, too, worked on and adjusted until the call is capable of delivering the proper tones—and then it is only successful in the hands of the very few. How often have I heard some duck-shooter, with mistaken optimism, dolefully "quacking" away on his call, and scaring every duck within hearing!

In my thirty-three years of duck-shooting I have never been able to learn to use what I may designate as the "quack" call—the typical call of the female mallard, and the slightly louder call of the shoveller. Certain ducks I can call successfully, namely, the canvasback and redhead and the widgeon. An old market shooter, Charley Vincent, gave me the secret of calling cans and redheads, and I have never known it to fail. It consists simply in

making a "thumping" noise, at very short and regular intervals. And this may be done with the heel of a rubber boot on the sides of a wooden boat, or on the sides of a wooden sinkbox, etc. Thus, tump! tump! tump! tump! tump! tump! continued at intervals of perhaps three to the second. I have tried this call hundreds of times, and never have I found it fail to work on even good-sized bands of cans or redheads, and for single birds it is very good medicine! Bluebills sometimes respond to it. With this call I have often turned single canvasback, even when shooting without decoys.

For imitating the peculiar flute-like whistle of the widgeon (baldpate) I have had great success by using a small nickel whistle, named the "Echo" whistle. The small cork ball should first be removed from the barrel, and with a little practice the mellow and penetrating call of the widgeon can be imitated most successfully—and few ducks respond more eagerly to a proper call than do the American widgeon (Anas Americana).

I have known only one man who could successfully call wild geese, and he imitated their clarion notes without the use of any made "call."

Whether any call could be devised or any man become so proficient as to imitate the wonderful music of the sandhill crane I very much doubt. The soul-stirring notes of the sandhill cranes, filtering down from the tremendous height at which these birds fly, heard on a frosty, star-strewn November night, is never to be forgotten.

## Canvasback Found in Egypt.

In all works on ornithology that I have read, and in all books on American game birds, and particularly American waterfowl, I have seen it stated that the canvasback duck is strictly indigenous to the North American continent and is not found elsewhere in the world, except in foreign zoological parks, where specimens have been sent from this country. The redhead duck is found in Europe, where it is called pochard. A variety of the widgeon, too, inhabits Europe (Mareca Penelope), differing slightly from its American cousin (Anas Americana). The mallard and teal are found all over the temperate zones of the globe. But for years I was firmly of the belief that the canvasback was wholly our own, a typical American bird, and fitted almost to take its place beside the great American eagle. However, in the Autumn of 1909 I was for a short time in Cairo, Egypt. I met in the bar of Shepheard's Hotel, an elderly gentleman, an American, to whom I remarked, during the course of a conversation, upon the immense number of ducks and geese that I had seen a few days previously along the shores of L'Eau Douce, on my way by train from Port Said to Cairo.

This led to this gentleman (whose name I cannot recall) telling me quite a bit about the wonderful duck shooting to be had in Egypt. I learned that he was even then outfitting for a duck shooting trip to some lakes in

the interior and that he looked forward to some wonderful canvasback shooting.

"Surely, sir," said I, "you must mean redheads. There are no canvasbacks on this side?" And I quoted some of the books I had read.

"I am sorry to disagree with your authorities," he replied, "but I must maintain that there are canvasbacks in Egypt—any number of them. I have shot canvasback ducks along the Chesapeake and on the Susquehanna marshes, and I know a canvasback duck when I see one. And a redhead, too, for that matter."

So there you are!

### Two Varieties of Canvasback.

Speaking of canvasback, I have never enjoyed the wonderful canvasback shooting that is to be found in certain favored locations near San Francisco Bay and the Suisin Marshes—the famous Tubb's Island Club, for instance. But one evening, a few seasons ago, I was talking to "Doc" Wilson at Newport Bay in southern California. Our subject was duck shooting, for we were going up the bay (where Wilson had some floating blinds), to try for a few canvasback on the morrow. Wilson is a member of the Tubb's Island Club and was telling me of the phenomenal canvasback shooting that that club afforded.

"Do you know," said he, "that there are two varieties of canvasback—or at least a sub-species?"

Upon my replying in the negative, he continued:

"Well, there are, and it is a fact well known among the Tubb's Island gunners. The first canvasbacks usually arrive in San Francisco Bay the latter part of October or the first of November. They are in plumage then and the heads of the drakes are the well-known chestnut color, the white markings on their backs, and the white plumage of the under parts bright and speckless. Then, along about the early or middle part of December, the sub-species (if so I may call them) arrive. They are much larger and heavier birds, and the heads of the drakes have a decidedly rusty appearance, and the white under parts of the drakes are tinged with grayish, rusty streaks. It is quite a distinct type of canvasback."

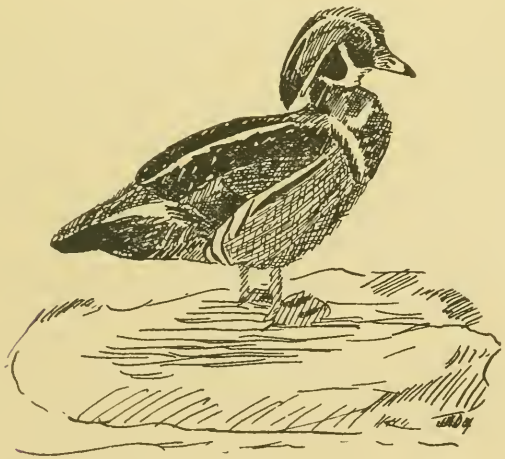
So there you are again!

### Ducks Far From Habitat.

Perhaps most wildfowlers are aware of the fact that "stragglers"—and by that I mean ducks far away from their usual habitat—are occasionally found in the day's bag. I once killed a European widgeon (Mareca Penelope) among a bag of other widgeon bagged at the Cerritos Gun Club. It was a male, in full winter plumage. I sent a note of the fact to a sportsman's journal at the time, and the editor noted the fact that it was the fourth instance that had been called to his attention from different American points. Bluewing teal are not infrequently killed in California. As to whether our common cinna-

mon teal is found in any numbers in the eastern states, I do not know. I have never seen a "black duck" (Anas Obscura) in California, nor have I ever heard of one being killed. I have, on the other hand, on three different occasions, seen in southern California good-sized flocks of the roseate spoonbill of Florida.

A rare visitor here from Mexico is the fulvous-bellied tree duck, which flies with the slow wing-beat of a goose. This duck and the cinnamon teal make southern, or at least middle, California about the northern limit of their annual migration, so that these birds arrive here just about the closing time of our open season, and depart for the south about the time our open season commences.



# THE QUEST OF THE MALLARD

EDWARD C. WARNER

MALLARD shooting down in the Illinois river bottoms is becoming more and more restricted to the preserves, where the birds are fed thousands of bushels of corn every season, and where the rules do not permit of the ducks being "burned out" by shooting before sunrise and after dark.

The competition among the throng of hunters outside the club boundaries is so keen that the acquisition of a good bag goes only to the man who is ever on the alert and who is not afraid of any hardship. It is one thing to arise betimes, enjoy a leisurely breakfast, and be piloted to a feeding pen which has been reserved for you and there pick off Mr. Greenhead as he comes for the corn which he knows awaits him; it is quite another to get up at 3:30, gulp down a cup of hot coffee, and row miles in the raw November air to some blind which, more than likely, is the objective of a half-dozen other hunters.

It was my good fortune to enjoy a day's shoot in the Illinois river country in November, 1919, which contained all the thrills which a hunter could ask for. With my long-time friend, Charley F——, I had gone to a camp in one of the little river towns for a week's vaca-

tion. There were plenty of ducks in the country, but the "bluebird weather" was not favorable and they refused to "work." Each day we looked eagerly for the weather forecast in the paper from Chicago, but were regularly disappointed by the prediction of "not much change in temperature." Day after day we scouted about the country, returning every night with but a duck or two to reward our efforts. From sunrise until dark we tramped through the marshes or waited patiently in a blind, only to see flock after flock of mallards pass over us at a lofty height in their journeys between the preserves and the big lakes.

### We Make a Discovery.

We had about given up hope of any shooting, and were bemoaning our luck in picking the wrong week for our vacation. And then, all of a sudden, things began to happen. We had made a blind near a patch of open water in some dead timber, and had been smoking and snoozing the time away since early morning without getting a shot. The day was warm, there was hardly a breath of air stirring, and the live decoys which we had set out sat as motionless as statues. I was about to suggest that we might as well take up the decoys and go back to camp, as it was 4 o'clock and there seemed to be little prospect of an evening flight, when one of our hens broke the stillness with a most violent quacking, which was immediately followed by a veritable babel on the part of her companions. Charles started up out of

his nap at this unwonted racket and grabbed a paddle in place of his gun. I looked up and saw a flock of perhaps a dozen mallards with wings set, and green heads twisted to one side, directly overhead. They sailed straight ahead and then made a wide swing around back of us. By the time they passed over us the second time we had got set and when their third circle brought them in front of us we were ready for them. Waiting until they dropped their red legs and seemed suspended, motionless, a few feet over the decoys, we let loose and after the smoke cleared away saw four greenheads and a hen on the water in front of us. We pushed the boat out to pick them up, thereby losing a fine chance at another flock, which was headed straight for us. We hurried back into the blind and in the next half-hour added a half-dozen more birds to our bag. The sun was now getting low and as we were in a region where it was not easy to find the way after dark we decided to pick up the decoys and leave while it was yet light. As we were entering the "cut-off" which leads from the overflowed timber into the river, Charley called to me, at the same time pointing in the direction from which we had just come. No less than a dozen flocks of mallards, hovering just over the tree-tops, and milling around in every direction, appeared against the red sky in the west. We pushed the boat into the roots of a fallen tree and watched the spectacle in silent wonder. Soon other flocks appeared, coming from every direction, but all converging to the same spot, the pond where

we had made our blind. We pushed away from the dead tree and made our way to the river. Never having discovered a gold mine I am not familiar with the sensations which attend such an experience; but if I ever do I expect to undergo something of the same thrill which I felt at seeing those mallards swarming over Bivins' pond—a thrill which was heightened by a realization of the possibilities which the next morning might contain. Just as we entered the river we heard a creaking of oars in the cut-off behind us and a moment later were dismayed to see the hazy outlines of a boat emerge from the shadows of the timber. Evidently we had not been the sole spectators of the scene.

### Plan For Next Day.

We resolved to say nothing about what we had seen at the camp, and when we took our seats at the supper table submitted to the usual bantering about coming in empty-handed. Of course, we took pains that nobody should know that we had brought in a good bag. We realized, however, that we had not been the only witnesses of the swarm of mallards that had descended on Bivins' pond, and as such news travels fast among the guides, whose livelihood depends on their success in getting the birds, we felt reasonably sure that there would be stiff competition for the blind next morning. These suspicions were confirmed later in the evening when the hunters gathered about the big fireplace for the evening smoke. Every few moments a guide would enter the cabin, call aside the

hunter he was "pushing," and there would follow a whispered conference, after which the hunter made a brave, but not altogether convincing effort, at appearing unconcerned. Someone suggested that it was about time to start the regular evening card game, but strangely enough, every man in the place seemed to have lost interest in cards. One after another offered excuses about needing a good night's rest until finally Charley and I were left in sole possession of the cabin. "Well, Old Top," said I, "what time do you think we will have to start in the morning to get that blind?" Charley looked at his watch. "To be safe," he answered, "I think we had better start now." We decided, however, that we could safely steal a few hour's sleep, and after getting ammunition, etc., arranged so that there would be no delay in getting away, we set the alarm for three o'clock and tumbled in. After what seemed like a ten-minute nap the alarm startled us out of a sound sleep, and I grabbed the clock and muffled it in a pillow lest someone else in the camp be awakened. Hastily dressing, we swallowed a cup of coffee from our thermos bottle and ten minutes later had reached the boat landing. In another ten minutes we had transferred a dozen live decoys from their pen to our boat and were ready to start. Nor were we any too early. Sounds of activity came from the different cottages and before we had proceeded a half-mile up the river the glow of flash-lights appeared among the duck pens along the shore.

### We Beat Them To It.

Our destination was perhaps three miles up the river from the camp and we knew that we had no time to lose, so we bent to our work with every ounce of energy. Arriving within perhaps a quarter of a mile of the mouth of the channel leading from the river into the overflowed timber the "put-put" of a motor boat came to our ears. Now the struggle was on in earnest. No pair of Klondike prospectors ever raced harder to their goal than we to the coveted blind; we rowed as if our very lives depended on the outcome. Five minutes later we arrived, panting and breathless, at the "cut-off," and taking the oars from their sockets, started to push our way among the fallen logs which here and there obstructed our passage. Fortunately we knew the ground almost as well as the natives, and although progress was slow in the darkness, we made fairly good headway with the aid of our flashlight. Ten minutes of frantic effort brought us to our destination, and we had scarcely pushed our boat into the blind when another boat arrived—just too late.

### A Grand Day's Sport.

As we reached the pond the ducks arose in thousands, with a roar like the sound of a waterfall. We set out our blocks and live birds and settled down for the long wait until sunrise. The monotony of this was broken every few minutes by the arrival of a boat, whose occupants returned our "Good morning" with grunts of disappoint-

ment at finding the blind occupied. Presently a few streaks of light appeared, and before it was possible to distinguish objects clearly we could hear the swish of wings overhead, accompanied by the familiar squawking of the hen mallards. As the sun's red rim appeared on the horizon there came the "boom-boom" of a gun far up the river, and this was the signal for us to start. For the next half-hour we enjoyed all the thrills a duck hunter could hope to realize. From every direction the birds came, singly, in pairs, and in flocks, as if Bivins' pond were the meeting place of all the mallards in the country. There was something there that they wanted, and we soon learned that we need not observe the ordinary rules of caution in the matter of keeping concealed. As we picked up the birds we did not take the trouble of pushing the boat back into the blind but merely kept alongside of it. After an hour's shooting we picked out the greenheads only, and by ten o'clock had our limit of thirty fine birds.

That night the sound of guns could be heard until long after dark, and by the next day Bivins' pond had been thoroughly "burned out." But we had had our day of glorious sport and we took back to Chicago not only a fine bag, but a memory of an achievement which is every duck hunter's goal—limit shooting of mallards.

# SHOOTING SNOW GEESE IN NEBRASKA

PAUL E. PAGE

YOU old timers, what would you give to be back on the old fly-way with the muzzle-loader, the black powder, a pocket full of last year's wasp nest for wadding, the flight from the north, the G. D. caps and youth?

Those G. D. caps, I have not thought of them in years, and what a flood of memories they unleash. I never did know what the G. D. stood for, but I do remember what I called them at the peril of my salvation.

Those crimson sunset streaks with the never-ending strings of pilgrims from the north are gone, and so is youth, but there is a glimmer of hope for the ducks.

I was in Alberta last October (1920) and I again stood on the fly-way and saw the red of the western sky made dim by the shadowy forms of untold thousands of mallards. I could have shot as we did in the old days, until my gun was so hot I had to put it in water.

No spring shooting tells the tale.

In 1880-81 there was a heavy fall of snow throughout the western states extending to the Rocky Mountains. This snow came in October and lasted until spring. About six feet fell in Nebraska and buried the corn fields so that there was no husking until spring.

## Goose Shooting in the Old Days.

It was a mild winter and the Missouri River kept open and this with the corn kept the geese on the sand bars all winter. They were there in the spring in untold millions. I was there also. Six dollars per dozen was the lure that attracted me.

I meant to shoot geese in Nebraska that spring and was properly equipped. I used a Diamond Daly ten-bore. I still have the old gun. It weighs twelve pounds when loaded with a couple of goose shells. My load was eight drams of Du Pont's F. G. black powder and one ounce of No. 1 shot, and believe me, whenever a he-goose flew into that load of shot there was no question but what there was a she-goose widow looking for a new husband.

I had great trouble in getting the 3-inch shells to hold this load, and there was no such thing as throwing away an empty shell. They were all reloaded again and again, and I even starched the ends so that I could crimp them.

## Used Team to Bring in Geese.

I put up at a farmer's and had the use of a saddle horse and a team to bring in my geese and take them to the express office. I started out each day by taking my saddle horse to some high point where I could get a view of the surrounding prairie and then watched the horizon towards the river. At about 10 o'clock, when the sun had warmed things up a little, the first flocks of white or snow geese would leave the river bars and start for the corn

fields. My object was to locate the line of flight of these flocks and after I had watched a dozen or more flocks go over or near a certain point, I rode to that point.

As a rule there was cover enough in the prairie grass to make a blind, and when there was not I used three stakes with chicken wire through which I wove grass. For an hour or so there would be a continuous flight, one flock following another and crossing at about the same place. A few birds set up as decoys helped swing in the flocks that got out of line.

### Took Birdseye View.

As soon as the morning flight was over I rode back to the house, got a bite to eat, a new supply of shells, showed the driver of the team where my geese were and then rode to the top of some hill where I could get a birdseye view of a number of small sloughs with clear water in the center. My object was to locate a lake of this kind on which there was a flock of white geese that had fed early and had come in for their noon snooze. I must have the white geese, as the brant, Canada or Hutchin's geese would not stand for the game I intended to play. When I had located the lake, with not too large a flock on it (but drove out any geese that might be on lakes that I passed on the way), I would find cover in the high grass at least three hundred yards from the lake and at a point where I was in direct line with the wind blowing from the center of the lake.

After being sure I had a good hiding place I would

shoot the gun and then duck for the cover. The geese would get up and sometimes leave, but as a rule would again settle on the lake after flying around and taking a look-see. If they left I would look up another lake and try it again. If they settled back on the water I would get up a little closer and shoot again, and in the course of time, if the scheme worked right, I could shoot within one hundred yards of the flock and they would not fly. When I got things fixed in this manner I was in for a big shoot. Every flock that had fed and was looking for water would be sure to see these white geese and come into the lake and would circle to come in against the wind and would come within range of my blind.

### Got Eighty in Afternoon.

It was not an uncommon thing to get fifty or sixty birds in a day's shoot. My big day was eighty in one afternoon, mostly white geese, wavies I believe they are now called.

There were a great many of the big Canada honkers, laughing geese, snow geese, and the small white geese or brant, but very few Hutchin's geese. They were tame, and one could get shots from horseback anywhere on the open prairie.

I shot eight honkers one morning within 300 yards of the house from an old buffalo wallow, and while I was never a Sandow or anything like one, I have handled a 60-pound pack over rough ground, and it took me two trips to get these geese to the house. Of course, eight

geese make an awkward load to pack, but if I had bundled them in a pack strap, I could not have handled them. I am sure that they weighed close to 100 pounds.

I have found that all geese are thin and light of weight when they come from the north. They are in their prime in the spring when they stop in their northern flight in a section where they can get to overflowed corn fields by short flights from some undisturbed river sand bar. They fatten in the fall when they stop long enough on the prairie to feed on the grain fields, but like the prairie canvasback they are at their best when corn fed in the spring.

### As to Weight of Geese.

The Hutchin's goose is identical with the Canada, but much smaller, with an average weight of around 5½ pounds. I never weighed but one goose. One spring, while living in South Dakota, a pair of honkers came on my place and hung around a month or more feeding on the overflowed corn fields and roosting in an open spot in a grass lake. I tried time and again to get them, but they were onto my game from the start. I believe the old gander knew my every move and even the size of the shot I was shooting. I wanted this pair for the reason that the gander was out of proportion in size to the goose. I stalked them one day, when the wind was blowing a gale, by means of a saddle horse, and got the pair. The goose was hog fat and weighed 12 pounds. The gander was a third larger and weighed 11 pounds. There was not an

ounce of fat on him, in fact he was in such condition that he was not fit for the table. There were no marks of old wounds on him and I concluded he had about lived out the 100 years allotted to him and was on the road to goose heaven. This chap had frame enough to have carried 5 or 6 pounds more of meat and fat and had he been in the same condition as his mate would have weighed 16 or 17 pounds. He was the largest goose, in the air or sitting on the water, I have ever seen.

I would put the weight of the Hutchin's goose at a minimum of 3 pounds and a maximum of 6 pounds when they reach the prairie feeding grounds direct from the north. Six weeks later I would place their weight at a minimum of 4 pounds and a maximum of 8 pounds. The Canada goose under like conditions I would place at 8 to 10 pounds and 10 to 14 pounds. Where the Canada goose reached the overflowed corn fields in the spring and fed for a month with a short flight from water and sand and was not hunted much, I would place its weight at from 11 to 15 pounds with now and then an old gander that would scale up to 16 pounds. I shot a number of Canada geese in Alberta last October (1920), and while they were large and full grown birds they were direct from the north and were very thin and light. While I did not weigh any of them I am quite sure that I did not have a bird that would weigh over 7½ or 8 pounds. I believe that shooters who claim the low weights for the Canada honker shoot their birds under the same conditions and those who claim the heavy birds shoot theirs under

like conditions. What I mean, is that the light-weight geese were feeding under like conditions regardless of what part of the country they were shot in and were probably feeding on wheat or grass and such roots and seeds they could get in the marshes. The heavy geese were shot where they were feeding on corn.

**Remarks Apply to Western Territory Only.**

My remarks apply to the goose country tributary to the Missouri, Platte, Snake and Columbia rivers and not to the coast districts. I have never shot on the Atlantic coast and know nothing about the conditions there. I have shot considerable on Puget Sound but the only bird that looks like a goose that I have shot on that body of water is the black sea brant. He is a little sport, but boy! oh, boy! he does spread himself in a baking pan.

It may be that geese are getting lighter. I am unable to say as I have not shot in the Missouri goose country in 25 years. But this I do know. If there are no geese killed on the Platte or Missouri river corn fields that weigh from 10 to 15 pounds, geese are getting lighter.

Remember, I am writing of a time when the geese were not chased from field to field with an automobile and kept on the move by means of every killing device known to man.

A goose is like a hog. Give him a fresh water sand bar, plenty of soaked corn and a quiet landscape, and he will get hog fat. On the other hand, chase him around and he develops into the same kind of a bird as the razor-back hog of Florida.

# DUCK SHOOTING IN ONTARIO

FOREST H. CONOVER

LOOKING back thirty-five years may seem a long time hence—even then my prediction forecasting the future was a serious one for the retaining of the migratory game birds.

Sport with the gun, from the age of fourteen, easily lured me into the realms of that fascinating recreation, and within its haven I have taken abode as the pinnacle of all outdoor sport in the art of the gun, for with it this kingly avenue offers to you a variety of conditions in shooting that no other line maintains. As well being a good shot the sportsman who entertains the desire as a masterly knight of the gun in "Duck Shooting" will have taken his degrees as well in the temperament of his duck boat, that more or less marks his destiny to a successful issue.

## Resume of the Past.

The establishment of all the essentials in the art without doubt would have a timely ending without the fullness of the resources creative of the sport. Year after year has revealed a perpetual dwindling of all species of waterfowl more or less, not from natural causes, but from nonobservance of the law in conservation and the curse in

cuddling agencies that beset the spare and limited flocks of the remaining waterfowl from the frigid north to the coast lines of the south, nothing more or less evident than unrestricted opportunities being responsible for the loss of our ducks.

The automobile, the broad scope of modern sporting arms, the disturbance of natural environments, including the deceptive battery and deadly contents, supported by aids of long open seasons and unlimited game bags, has changed the scene so appalling to the ethics of sportsmanship; and now we should take our hats off to the authors of the Federal Migratory Bird Law between Great Britain and the United States.

The past can but remain as a gruesome memory, and within lurks a conscience of condemnation and perchance the ghost of solace smiling at the ethics of by-gone days in the mists of black powder and spring shooting. Those without transgression may cast the first stone.

### Shooting in the Eighties.

Back in the eighties I have the memories of the past, and may here relate one of the eventful exploits at one of the ducking grounds in Kent County, Ontario, known as the "Erie Eau," adjacent to the waters of Lake Erie. The extent of this area is nine miles in length by two and one-half miles wide, with deep fringing of bays and channels thickly studded with wild rice, and the deeper waters afford abundance of wild celery, appeasing the appetites of the canvasback and redhead.

Our party of four had been in camp here for three days, and although moderate weather had marked no unusual bags, there was evidence sufficient to suspect the coming of a wind storm that would be in order for October. My slumbers had been broken at intervals throughout the night listening to the terrific gusts of wind that threatened the safety of the tents, although in the midst of jeopardy I saw the tall reeds careening partially prostrate in the toils of the maddening wind currents, tearing great ragged holes in the dark canopy above, and catpawing the placid waters of the ponds.

My trained pointer dog, Budd, yawned and figited, cast warning glances toward me as a premonition of the storm. All night the storm raged, and the gnawing of the guy lines as they tugged at the stakes cutting the wind's force gave doleful screeching sounds.

### The Morning Start.

At five o'clock the camp was astir, and easing off the lacing of the tent opening I peered out. The wind had somewhat abated, and after the morning repast I was inside my hunting clothes, and with a good supply of shells, gun and dog, stepped into my hunting boat. The wind tore at me like a wild beast as I fought to keep balance in the boat as she payed away before the gale. I maintained the long push paddle that kept the little grass witch-head on to its destination.

Over yonder beyond the reed lines are two or three ponds that in my early morning's reckoning would likely

afford good opportunities for shooting. The gloom of the night was slowly waning into and with it the dark leaden strings of misty clouds racing to the leeward gave way for the first rays of the morning light.

Shoving the boat with a strong drive into the reeds and grass I scrambled out, lining a trail for one of the ponds. Budd close at heel, worming his form through the seething growth, was alert, for his education in early days of puppyhood had not been neglected. He knew from A to Z the ropes that pull off the stunts giving fame to dogs worthy as retrievers, the glory they merit.

The morning's grey dawn still flung its shadows along the borders of the sloughs. The rasping, rustling reeds were tuned to the pitch of the gale's din. Downy bunches of fleeting cat tail, ducking and darting, were at the mercy of the wind. I had just finished tucking in my cap lacing, and picking up the gun was confronted with a zig zagging mallard, beating up wind on the lee of the pond. Letting him pass to the windward, he fell to the crack of the gun within fifteen yards.

### Myriads of Ducks.

In nearly every direction were ducks; some ascending, others descending, side drifting and tilting, laboring to gain some abode of shelter. A half dozen blacks now pitched before me, and doubling up the leader, two more fell on a cross flight with the second barrel. Bungling a chance on a pair of gadwalls, I scored only with the second shot. Returning to the boat with my ducks, I

found I had eleven, and after replenishing the shells crossed over to another location that gave ample shooting. Here I remained for some time, meeting with good success, and after toting my birds over a third trip, I found I had thirty-one, principally mallards.

I reached the camp at 2 P. M., after a laborious struggle against the gale, and found the rest of my companions in advance of me reporting equally good success relative to the day's events, which brought to a close a most enjoyable and successful hunting trip.

Those were days when ducks flew and migrated in flocks of hundreds and restrictive regulations among the unwritten laws.

# TIMBER SHOOTING ON THE ILLINOIS RIVER

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

DO NOT a few old battered decoys conduce to reminiscence? Could they speak, what tales they could tell of many glories of bygone days! I can well remember the first decoys I ever saw. They had been abandoned, being frozen in at a rush-bordered pond, by hunters not from our country. Who they had belonged to we could only surmise. Shades of Elliston, supreme decoy-builder, they had been made by a master hand! They were wonderfully lifelike.

Many autumns now have vanished since I first shot mallards in the timber on the Illinois river. On the part of the river on which I then lived, timber shooting was had in the spring only, rarely in the fall. Further down the river, at Senachwine and other points, one could shoot for weeks at a time in the timber, especially in the spring. I have shot so close to the old town of Hennepin I could plainly hear the cries of the school children playing during recess.

Timber shooting is one of the best of sports. The Illinois River and Reelfoot Lake are two of the most noted localities on the continent for this form of sport. There you see that royal bird, the mallard, at his best. All the shoal-water ducks frequent the timber to some

extent, but the mallard is most numerous. The mallard is never an open-water bird from choice. They love the overflowed timber. Failing that, their next choice is little rush-surrounded ponds. In the timber they find both food and shelter. They prefer to roost there, too. If you rout them out from a spot in the timber they like, instead of settling in some other place for the day, they will come back shortly, singly, and in small flocks, especially should the weather be blustering and chilly. Here they feed on smartweed, nut grass and other aquatic plants and vegetable matter. Practically all the timber that is standing in the fall at a normal stage of water are dead trees and sometimes there is considerable buck-brush. Dead trees will stand upright in the water for years before succumbing.

The deep water and diving birds, such as redheads, canvasbacks, bluebills, etc., do not frequent the timber. In the routine of duck migration which occurs during the open season three characteristics are obvious: Rest and retirement on large areas of water; the midday revel and preening of feathers; the afternoon or evening flight to the feeding grounds.

### Calling Very Effective in the Timber.

Nowhere will ducks respond to a call more readily than in the timber. This is largely because, not seeing any large areas of open water, they are prone to be guided by the call of their kind, a fact of which the hunter takes full advantage.

Last November I enjoyed several days' shooting in the timber on the Illinois, and will endeavor to describe one day's sport. I hasten to add that each day's experience was different, which explains the fascination of the alluring sport of wildfowling.

After watching the flight for a time, I had picked out a spot in the edge of the timber near an open pond that the mallards seemed to favor. The height of the timber was from twenty to forty feet. Although I had decoys with me, I would try and get some shots without their use. At first I tried a few shots sitting in my boat.

My first two shots were at a small flock of five mallards, killing one with each barrel. An old drake passed, his head moving from side to side, looking for his kind, or for possible danger. I let him pass, not firing. Now a flock of gray ducks (gadwalls) headed directly for me. I fired two shots when they were nearly over head, but only scored one hit. Fortunately, none of the birds down were winged, but all were dead, so I let them lie where they had fallen. After studying the gray duck considerable I have discovered while not excessively wary on the water, when the wing they are very cautious and are as quick to note a suspicious object as the mallard. Ofttimes I could see the white spots on their wings as they volplaned at a distance. The gray duck is a fine sporting bird, and also excellent eating.

### Drops a Pair of Hens.

Now a pair of ducks headed my way and were unsuspicious of danger. When nearly overhead I fired and one started to fall. Quickly I got in the second barrel and was surprised to get my second bird also. When I pushed out to gather them I was astonished to find two hen birds, one a mallard and the other a pintail, A splended pair of birds, too, fat and heavy. Were they widows, divorcees, or a couple of vamps? One is confronted with such a legion of surprises in duck shooting, what will happen next cannot be surmized.

As I did not wish to build a blind and some of the ducks would see my boat, I decided to leave it further back in the woods and wade out and sit on an old log which had part of a tree trunk overhanging. This was blind enough and a firm seat. Birds coming toward me against the wind would pass me before they would see the boat. Get the idea?

I had just got settled when a duck came right over me not over 30 yards high. I gave her a shot and as she fell I saw that it was a black duck or black mallard, as they are called on the river. I noted the glossy feathers and the darker speculums. The black duck is not a freak of nature like the albino, but is a separate and distinct species. Being in lesser numbers in the west, they often travel with mallards. They are to the east what the mallard is to the west.

Now the thin ice which had formed over night had melted from the sun's rays and ducks were returning with the utmost confidence, seeming to say, "We know this place. It is safe here." But two streams of fire poured from a figure seated on a log and they whirled away on the wind to seek a safe refuge.

Longneck pintails drifted overhead. Little flocks of greenwing teal scurried among the trees. Baldpates flitted into a large open pond just beyond, giving their musical whistling call. Occasionally I could pick out a black duck among the mallards.

## A Prelude to Winter.

There was a little touch of winter now, with feathery snowflakes drifting down, and a stiff northwest wind. High up four large flocks of bluebills passed over, heading down the valley. They were plainly travelers from the north. Who can imagine the wanderings or travels of a flock of ducks in a day when on migration? Four years ago in southwestern Iowa I saw a flight of tens of thousands of noble mallards down the valley of the Missouri river. It lasted during three days of bitter cold weather. They would not face the cutting northwest wind. They were bound for the south and knew where they were going. What I marveled at was that every flock knew its course as though following a compass. In the old days I have seen wild pigeons following the same course, although each flock was out of sight

of the preceding one. Jack Miner is the man who has taught us much about the migration of waterfowl. "As the crow flies" is a tradition, but as the duck flies is a revelation in directness. Their migrations are a mystery and a marvel. One reasons that the older birds direct the flight. As early as March last season large numbers of flocks of ducks and geese were in Canada while it was yet cold in this latitude. The urge to migrate comes to them early.

Sometimes one learns much by watching waterfowl unobserved at rest and play. It was pleasant to sit there and watch the journeying waterfowl as well as those nearer at hand. A flock of Canada geese honked down the valley with their far-carrying cries. Numberless bands of cormorants, erroneously called loons on the river, filed by. Their formation in flight often resembles that of geese. The resemblance ends there. Someone has humorously dubbed them "nigger geese." The true loon is the great northern diver.

### Wariness of the Goldeneye.

Now I heard a flock of goldeneyes coming down the valley. Nothing stirs me more than the noise of an approaching flock of these wary birds. The first distant thrilling whir as the sound reaches your ears, the louder nearer whistling as they pass and the final distant and gradual dying away of the musical sound of their wings. Many lonely far northern marshes and lakes had they

visited. Peace River, the Athabasca, and doubtless their keen yellow eyes had swept the borders of the Arctic seas. One of the keenest-sighted and alert of all water-fowl, as I discovered while studying them on the lower Kankakee River when a boy. I have known them to remain there all Winter in water so swift it would not freeze. You need to be well concealed to decoy them.

But I must have a few more ducks and went into action again. After a few hours, following a succession of hits and misses, I had the legal limit, mallards and gray ducks only. It was now about 2 o'clock and I called it a day.

### The Return.

Rounding a bend in the river on my way back to camp and hugging the shore where the fringe of ancient oak trees broke the force of the wind somewhat, the reports of far-away shots came to my ears, and I realized to the utmost the glory of a life among the water-fowl.

Where can it be enjoyed more than upon the glorious old Illinois River?

# RECREATION AND OUR BROTHERHOOD

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

RECREATION days are among the happiest of our lives and none are more truly enjoyable than those devoted to the noble sport of wildfowling.

In addition to our individual delight in this finest of pastimes, there is afforded us an opportunity to make new and wider acquaintances among brother knights of the gun and induce friendships of the most pleasurable kind.

Truly are we benefitted by associating with so many of the rare spirits comprising the vast numbers throughout the land who are devotees of this fascinating sport.

So when that vague yearning steals over the sportsman once more for his annual hunt, anticipation is heightened by the knowledge that he will meet many of those kindred brother sportsmen and lovers of nature, the members of the United Order of Duck Hunters of America. I greet you, brother!

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